

GADAMER AND AESTHETICS: A COMPREHENSIVE  
CRITIQUE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
OF  
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

GIZEM GÖNÜLTAŞ

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR  
THE DEGREE OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
IN  
THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

SEPTEMBER 2024



Approval of the thesis:

**GADAMER AND AESTHETICS: A COMPREHENSIVE CRITIQUE**

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## ABSTRACT

### GADAMER AND AESTHETICS: COMPREHENSIVE CRITIQUE

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September 2024, 90 pages

This thesis presents Gadamer's criticism of the abstract and subjective aspects of traditional aesthetics and the resulting concepts of aesthetic consciousness and aesthetic differentiation. The final chapters of this thesis focus on analyzing the status of aesthetics and the experience of art within Gadamer's own philosophical hermeneutics. The first part of *Truth and Method* deals with Gadamer's critique of traditional aesthetics, which is quite crucial for understanding the ontological status of works of art. Furthermore, to make sense of Gadamer's writings on specific works of art or art genres after this work, familiarity with Gadamer's traditional aesthetic criticism is helpful. Therefore, this thesis applies not only to *Truth and Method* but also to various other sources written by Gadamer to provide a comprehensive presentation of why and how Gadamer finds aesthetics and the experience of art crucial. The chapter on transcending traditional aesthetics in *Truth and Method* is concerned with recovering the truth claim of human sciences and art. According to Gadamer, the subjective and autonomous understanding of aesthetics opened up by Kantian aesthetics, which shaped the modern understanding of art, weakened the connection of art with truth. Together with art, this understanding also weakened the relation of the human sciences, which cannot be constrained by any particular

method, to truth. This thesis aims to demonstrate that Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics encompasses the experience of art by drawing attention to the problematic aspects of traditional aesthetics.

**Keywords:** Gadamer, Traditional Aesthetics, Aesthetic Consciousness, Artwork

## ÖZ

### GADAMER VE ESTETİK: KAPSAMLI BİR ELEŞTİRİ

Gizem Gönültaş

Yüksek Lisans, Felsefe Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. ŞerefHalil Turan

Eylül 2024, 90 Sayfa

Bu tez, Gadamer'in geleneksel estetiğin soyut ve öznel niteliklerine yönelik eleştirisini ve bunun sonucunda ortaya çıkan estetik bilinç ve estetik farklılaşma kavramlarını incelemektedir. Tezin son bölümleri, Gadamer'in kendi felsefi hermeneutiği içinde estetiğin ve sanat deneyiminin konumunu analiz etmeye odaklanmaktadır. Gadamer'in *Hakikat ve Yöntem* adlı eserinin ilk bölümü, sanat eserlerinin ontolojik statüsünü anlamak için oldukça önemli olan geleneksel estetik eleştirisini ele almaktadır. Ayrıca, Gadamer'in bu çalışmasından sonra belirli sanat eserleri ve türleri üzerine yazdıklarını anlamlandırabilmek için de Gadamer'in geleneksel estetik eleştirisine aşına olmak faydalı olacaktır. Dolayısıyla bu tez, Gadamer'in estetiği ve sanat deneyimini neden ve nasıl önemli bulduğuna dair kapsamlı bir sunum sağlamak adına yalnızca *Hakikat ve Yöntem*'e değil, Gadamer tarafından yazılmış diğer çeşitli kaynaklara da başvurmaktadır. Gadamer'in sanat ve estetiğe ilişkin görüşleri *Hakikat ve Yöntem*'in odak noktasını oluşturmaz. Aslında *Hakikat ve Yöntem* 'de geleneksel estetiğin aşılmasıyla ilgili bölüm, insan bilimlerinin ve sanatın hakikat iddiasının geri kazanılmasıyla ilgilidir. Gadamer'e göre modern sanat anlayışını şekillendiren Kantçı estetiğin açtığı öznel ve özerk estetik anlayışı, sanatın hakikatle olan bağıını zayıflatmıştır. Bu anlayış sanatla



birlikte, herhangi bir yöntemle sınırlandırılmayacak olan insan bilimlerinin hakikatle ilişkisini de zayıflatmıştır. Bu tez, geleneksel estetiğin sorunlu yönlerine dikkat çekerek, Gadamer'in felsefi hermeneutiğinin sanat deneyimini de kapsadığını göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Gadamer, Geleneksel Estetik, Estetik Bilinç, Sanat Eseri

*To my grandparents, Ali Aydın and Tülay Aydın, who lost their home but are the definition of home for me. And to my beloved cat, my best friend Sisyphus, for always being there to cheer me up during the long study nights.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Şeref Halil Turan for his patience in this long and quite unpredictable journey, for delicately monitoring every stage of my thesis and providing substantial contributions and comments. Throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies, I have gained valuable insights that have changed my perspective on both art and life from his lectures. He has shown us the multifaceted relationship between philosophy and art, not only by referring to the views of a particular philosopher or philosophical movement, but also by introducing us to various forms and historical periods of art.

Again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Assist. Prof. Dr. Corry Shores, almost all of whose lectures I have attended and who has never withheld his support on my studies, although not specifically in the fields of art and aesthetics. I would like to mention that you have inspired me with your respect for student opinions and the colorfulness of your reading lists in your lectures.

I would like to sincerely thank my family, my brother Hakan Berk Gönültaş and my father Hakan Gönültaş, and especially my mother, Nazan Gönültaş, who never lost their faith in me and never ceased to be supportive. Having them beside me allowed me to handle the thesis process in a healthier way. Likewise, the great support and endurance of my aunt Handan Sinan was very significant for this process.

I would also like to sincerely thank my friends; Doğa Çal, Tuğberk Samur and Şeyma Oran, for sharing their thoughts about the thesis and for not leaving me alone even though we were far away from each other during this process. Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Özgür Özdemir and İrfan Ertan, both of whom have stood by me through all the obstacles and whom I always know will continue to support me in the future.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

As one of the prominent figures of philosophical hermeneutics, a significant discipline of 20th-century philosophy, Gadamer identified himself as “a teacher and a speaker” rather than a philosopher. He dedicates most of his life to pursuing research, writing, and attending conferences. This implies that the emphasis on self-education, dialogue, and character formation in philosophical hermeneutics aligns closely with his personality and lifestyle. Even though his seminal work, *Truth and Method*, was published in book form, Gadamer preferred to publish his works as articles mainly compiled from his lectures or conference speeches throughout his lifetime. As evident from this fact, Gadamer values discourse and dialogue more than his contribution to the writing field. Speaking, hearing, and understanding, with their direct connections to the experience of being human beings of the world, are perhaps for a hermeneutic thinker not to be prioritized over writing. After all, for a considerable period of time, hermeneutics has attempted to reinterpret the language between text and reader, author and text, between text and text, and between text and generations. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, however, unlike classical hermeneutics, situates the experience of art within the scope of immediate human experience. This is associated with the phenomenological context of Gadamer's hermeneutics. Gadamer mentions that when we perceive something, we perceive it as ‘something’ and that each perception includes understanding and interpretation. Therefore, understanding is always connected to perception itself. It is essential to recognize that our perception does not have a pure characteristic to understand the experience of art. Thus, the first chapter of *Truth and Method*, “Transcending the aesthetic dimension,” also critically examines Gadamer's opposition to the detachment of art experience from its own tradition and identity by introducing a pure subjectivist understanding.

Hermeneutics is named after Hermes, the messenger of the gods. In Greek Mythology, the task of this God is to bridge the “ontological gap” between God and human beings by carrying the word of God to human beings (Grondin, 2003, p. 23). With the words of divine beings, human beings realize their share in divine nature that comes from their craftsman. Considered in this light, in the first place, hermeneutics aims to make human beings familiar with what is alien and unintelligible. However, according to Gadamer, the task of hermeneutics is not only limited to resolving what is unintelligible in the interpretation of the texts. It should be considered in relation to all human experiences in the world. In addition, among all human experiences, Gadamer argues that one human experience, in particular, has a direct and transformative impact on our understanding of our finitude and our human condition. This experience is the experience of art. Gadamer argues that the experience of art constitutes an immediacy that transcends all attempts at interpreting historical or religious structures and texts.

This thesis concerns Gadamer's critique of the traditional aesthetics and aesthetic consciousness pioneered by Kantian aesthetics, which finds its most comprehensive form in *Truth and Method*, and Gadamer's contribution to the debate on the legitimacy of aesthetics and art. Gadamer's input to the discussion of aesthetic experience is noteworthy because he transforms the Kantian epistemological question of aesthetics into a Heideggerian ontological question (Davey, 2006, p. 21). While Kant starts by moving aesthetics entirely out of the realm of epistemology in his search for justification, Gadamer and Heidegger's position is concerned with understanding how art operates itself and influences other beings- human beings in particular.

The first chapter of *Truth and Method*, related to aesthetics, does not directly lead us to *Truth and Method's* primary purpose; rather, it can be understood as associated with other chapters. Despite *Truth and Method's* extensive criticism of aesthetic consciousness in the book's first chapter, Gadamer's views on art and aesthetics are presented in another chapter, which discusses the ontological status of the work of art, following his initial focus on traditional aesthetics. In this chapter, Gadamer argues that artworks have a unique character of revealing their truth and providing



immediate insight into the human experience. He argues that the work of art is more than just an object of pleasure; for him, with art, we can have a better understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Since Gadamer does not consider himself a systematic philosopher, as he states in *Truth and Method*, there is no point in seeking an all-encompassing system that explains and prescribes everything in his philosophy (Gadamer, 2004, p. xxv). Therefore, there is no positive systematic understanding of aesthetics in *Truth and Method*. Instead of developing his philosophical system of aesthetics, Gadamer focuses on the mistakes of other philosophers in their conceptions of aesthetics. Therefore, the first part of this chapter will focus on the negative aspects of Gadamer's understanding of aesthetics.

Nevertheless, although Gadamer has not systematically attempted to construct aesthetics, the positive aspects of his thought are evident in the chapters of *Truth and Method* that relate to the truth conveyed by the work of art, as well as in his works about the experience of art, which become increasingly emphasized in his later works. Thus, Gadamer's views on art and aesthetics are not only limited to these chapters. This thesis also examines Gadamer's other writings on art and aesthetics that come after the publication of this book. Hence, his other works in which Gadamer discusses aesthetics and art experience, such as *The Relevance of Beautiful* and "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics," also constitute two foci of this thesis.

The first two chapters of this thesis will stress Gadamer's critique of aesthetics, which originates from Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and the resulting aesthetic consciousness and aesthetic differentiation in *Truth and Method*. The parts also aim to elaborate on Gadamer's emphasis on overcoming traditional aesthetics as one of the central developmental phases of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer's views on the ontological status of the truth carried by the work of art and his perspective on how art experiences correlate with concepts like play, festival, and symbol will be discussed in the third chapter. Lastly, the fourth chapter explores the relationship between understanding, the fundamental task of hermeneutics, and aesthetics.

Since the publication of *Truth and Method*, Gadamer's hermeneutics has been criticized by various voices. Much has been written about the second and third parts of *Truth and Method*, which include widely discussed concepts such as the fusion of horizons and the universality of hermeneutics. However, apart from these concepts central to Gadamer's philosophy, his insights on aesthetics have not received much academic attention until recently. This is primarily because of the critique of aesthetic consciousness in the first chapter of *Truth and Method*; while providing a substantive intellectual assessment, it only offers a few novel insights to the broader debate of the justification of aesthetics. Nevertheless, Gadamer's second chapter on *Truth and Method*, in which he talks about his views on the ontological status of art, and the passages in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, which speak about the continuity and transformative aspect of art, have made substantial contributions to aesthetics.

In the contemporary world, where the power of technology and materiality is at its peak, attempting to discuss aesthetics and effective dialogue has become an insignificant concern. Within today's academic philosophy, aesthetics has gradually experienced a decline from its former prominence and now occupies a relatively negligible position alongside major sub-disciplines such as philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and political and moral philosophy. However, no matter how the world changes, according to Gadamer, the experience of art will persist as long as human beings are "there," and the beautiful will pursue its relationship with the Good and the Truth.

Throughout the history of human beings, what beauty is and how it arouses sensations in human beings has been examined by philosophers in numerous ways. Aesthetics emerges as one of the fundamental concerns where Gadamer engages in critical and multidimensional evaluations with prominent figures in the history of philosophy, such as Kant, Hegel, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Schiller, from a hermeneutical perspective in his seminal work *Truth and Method*. As the intention of this thesis, I will occasionally refer to the arguments of different philosophers. Still, I will confine the aesthetic debate to the critique of Kantian aesthetics and its effects.

Due to the rapid scientific discoveries that directly influenced Kantian philosophy and the universal trust in human reason, which was deeply embedded in the

Enlightenment, aesthetics became a subject that needed to find academic justification for itself, and, like other branches, it needed to gain fundamental principles to operate. To respond to this necessity, Kant wrote *Critique of Judgment*, which included his ideas on aesthetics. After the 18th century, with Kant's initiative, aesthetics attained an autonomous realm of justification. Due to the introduction of universal a priori principles for aesthetics, Kant's aesthetic theory can be seen as a paradigm shift in the modern sense. To recover different kinds of truth that extend the scope of epistemology, Gadamer returns to where he finds the genesis of the problems of traditional aesthetics: Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. However, he also considers that the central issue in the question of traditional aesthetics does not entirely rely on Kantian philosophy but on the transformation of Kant's views into an aesthetics of the subject by the thinkers following him, especially his Romantic successors, particularly Schiller and Schleiermacher. However, it would not be entirely convenient to indicate individual names of Romantic philosophers because Gadamer's account of their misinterpretation of Kant's aesthetics is due more to a general intellectual atmosphere. He regards the conversion of Kant's emphasis on the subjective universality of taste into an emphasis on creative genius by the romantics as a "subsequent shift" not entirely compatible with Kant's overall project (Gadamer, 2004, p. 40).

Gadamer argues that beauty in art and nature was associated with everyday, practical, and religious life before Kantian aesthetics. For him, the long-term kinship between the good, the beautiful, and the moral had diminished as over-confidence in human rationality and science sharpened after Kant's attempt. This paradigm shift that occurred after Kantian aesthetics had notable effects on the contemporary understanding of art and its cultural value and how artists perceived their work and their role within the broader societal framework. For him, Kant retreats aesthetics to the ground of subjective universality, and aesthetics came to be regarded as exclusively having a subjectivist root. Although Gadamer endorses Kant's attribution of universal validity to the judgment of taste, he criticizes Kant for grounding it on subjective a priori principles. Likewise, Gadamer is critical of the over-emphasis of Romanticism on the concepts of genius and *Erlebnis*. Therefore, Gadamer asserts

that whenever aesthetics turned into an aesthetics of the subject, it lost its once evident bond with truth over time.

There is a multifaceted relationship between art's social, religious, and philosophical significance. According to Gadamer, the loss of the significance of art in one of these fields also caused a loss of meaning in other fields. When art lost communal and religious tasks related to its once evident truth claim, it also lost its significance for philosophy. The fact that the truth conveyed by the work of art is not only related to aesthetics but also considered by people as communal and religious has made art relevant to philosophy in its ongoing pursuit of truth. Gadamer claims that the connection between art and philosophy remained relevant until neo-Kantians recognized different kinds of truth other than scientific and methodological (Gadamer, 2007, p. 8). By emphasizing the primacy of individual experience and understanding in art and aesthetics, which are outside the domain of science, the Neo-Kantians contributed to the expansion of the problem between art and the claim to truth, which began with Kant and continued with the Romantics. However, Gadamer considers that such an approach does not produce a discontinuity in art but only leads to a reconstruction of the role of art in society and philosophy by ignoring its cognitive value. According to Gadamer, the intimate connection between art and philosophy is not only historical but also intrinsically rooted in human existence and understanding. He claims that “the relevance of art to philosophy is a task assigned to us by our historical heritage” (Gadamer, 2007, p. 8).

Gadamer claims that traditional aesthetics pioneered by Kant is concerned not with reality but with the subjective pleasure the individual derives from the aesthetic experience. Therefore, the subject's experience and feelings become the sole motive for the experience of art and the production of knowledge in the human sciences. Gadamer advocates a shift from subjectivist and formalist conceptions of aesthetics to a dialogical understanding of the experience of art that acknowledges the role of tradition and language in the formation of our understanding and appreciation of art.

When Gadamer published *Truth and Method*, he recognized not only the problems of the autonomous field of aesthetics but also the problems created by the subject-object

relationship of classical aesthetics, which he also addressed in his critique of the concept of aesthetic consciousness. He intends to pull aesthetics out of a purely formal sphere into the horizon of hermeneutics. Just as the sculptor Pygmalion, whose tale is narrated by the Roman poet Ovidius (Ovidius Naso, 1922, lines 243-297), falls in love with Galatea, the sculpture he created, and asks the gods to flesh her out so he can marry her, Gadamer's intention appears to flesh out aesthetics through art. Although the woman in the story is flawless as a sculpture, she is beyond the man's touch. Rather than a realm of perfection excluded from concepts such as everyday aesthetics and performative arts, Gadamer wishes us to focus on the transformative power of the experience that arises from the encounter with the work of art.

## CHAPTER 2

### AESTHETICS AS THE POINT OF DEPARTURE

Gadamer begins his work, *Truth and Method*, with the question of aesthetics. He maintains that truth and aesthetics had a close relationship before Kant. In the first place, aesthetics was far from exclusively restricted to artistic endeavors. It was also an inseparable element of implementing societal principles and values. The communal implications of concepts like tact, sensibility, and character development are closely connected with appropriate moral behavior and aesthetics that mirror the beliefs and values of society. Gadamer argues that the truth of artwork transcends the scope of epistemology because, according to him, these kinds of truths are conditioned by history and prejudices from the past.

Gadamer asserts that the role of art and aesthetics drastically changed after Kant. He underlines this tendency of modernity to exclude art from the sphere of truth and assumes that even the “science of art” cannot fully comprehend the truth behind the experience of art (Gadamer, 2004, p. xxi). For Gadamer, Kant proposed the purified understanding of aesthetics because he bases aesthetics on a priori principles, which are not part of a particular immediate human experience. As a result, aesthetic objects are reduced to mere sources of pleasure, devoid of inner truth. Gadamer thinks this attempt consequently results in the loss of cognitive content in aesthetics and the arts. For this reason, Kant's grounding of the aesthetic field in subjective universality opens the route to the view of the arts and humanities as subjective fields of interest rather than bearers of truth. Still,

Gadamer argues that even though taste, judgment, and common sense were indispensable parts of the truth before Kantian aesthetics, Kant's attempt is beneficial for preventing aesthetics from having a complete relativistic basis.

Gadamer asserts that if we reclaim the truth of a work of art, we can also reclaim the truths immanent in all other forms of human sciences. According to Gadamer, among all the forms of truth that human beings encounter in experience, the truth of art is the experience most directly addressed to us. Gadamer expresses this as follows:

In my book *Truth and Method*, I first began my considerations with art and not with science or even the “human sciences.” Even within the human sciences, it is art that brings the fundamental questions of human beings to our awareness in such a unique way – indeed, in such a way that no resistance or objection against it arises. An artwork is like a *model* [*Vorbild*] for us in this regard (Gadamer, 2007, p. 115).

Gadamer prefers to initiate his project by introducing the problems caused by Kantian aesthetics to reclaim the truth of a work of art. As a *model*, when the truth claim of art is actualized, the human sciences, especially history, will also regain their truth, distinct from that of the natural sciences.

As mentioned earlier, Gadamer asserts that although the conception of “subjective universality” offers aesthetics independent and autonomous characteristics, it causes the elimination of art from the realms of morality and knowledge. He criticizes Kant’s transcendental idealism for encouraging its successors to reduce aesthetics to a purely subjective endeavor, which causes neglect of practical reason and concrete situations. Therefore, the aesthetic dimension does not offer a fruitful resource for understanding art. In this context, one of the most prominent figures in the Gadamerian literature, Joel Weinsheimer, claims, “Gadamer's magnum opus offers not so much an aesthetic as an *anti-aesthetic*” (Weinsheimer, 1998, p. 264). In the following section, I will try to understand why Gadamer believes the connection between human science and aesthetics should not be considered separately.

## **2.1. Aesthetics and Its Relationship with The Problem of Method**

Chapter 1 deals with aesthetics as a departure point for Gadamer’s project. Let us now consider the relevance of Gadamer’s criticism of the problem of methods in human sciences. As the first chapter of *Truth and Method* suggests, Gadamer traces the origin of the reduction of truth to the methodological field and the separation of aesthetics from its social and moral aspects. This chapter of the thesis, even though it

is not seemingly related to art, is crucial for understanding exactly where Gadamer situates the experience of art.

Gadamer emphasizes that the exclusion of aesthetics and the experience of art from the field of truth is a vital mistake for the human sciences. As I mentioned in the last chapter, artwork is like a *model* that offers us direct truths about the human experience in the world. Thus, for Gadamer, this exclusion has negatively affected all human sciences, especially history. Gadamer suggests that we must go beyond the current understanding of aesthetics to save art and the human sciences. This does not mean rejecting aesthetics altogether but transcending its limits to understanding the truth in art experiences. By transcending the boundaries of aesthetics, the authenticity and truth value of the experience of art are restored. In this way, the human sciences also regain their “self-understanding.” When Gadamer speaks of the self-understanding of the human sciences, he means that they are able to reaffirm their scientific legitimacy without being subjected to the methods and constraints of the natural sciences.

Before the undeniable victory of the natural sciences’ methodology in today’s rapidly changing technological atmosphere, many attempts have been made to unify the human sciences under a definite methodology. With *Truth and Method*, Gadamer became one of the pioneering figures contributing to the modern extension of debate on human sciences’ methodology even though it was not his primary purpose. In *Truth and Method*, he strives to overcome modern science's approach to knowledge and truth, which is restricted by methodology.

Gadamer states that the methodology of the natural sciences is central to the conceptualization of *Geisteswissenschaften*, the German term for the human sciences developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although human sciences still retain the characteristics of *Geist*, “spirit” from their etymological origins, to be recognized as sciences, they must be implemented in conformity with the inductive logic used in the natural sciences (Gadamer, 2004, p. 4). In the search for universal principles that govern human behavior and situations, human sciences seek a methodology just like natural sciences. However, the unpredictable character of human-related data challenges the



reliability of human sciences. The quest for certainty and objectivity in the natural sciences raises the question of whether the human sciences should also be recognized as sciences. However, the difficulty of identifying a mechanism similar to natural progress in the human sciences prevents human sciences from completely surrendering to a method. For this reason, Gadamer argues that it is essential to free other kinds of truth, such as those of arts and human sciences, from the methodological subjugation of modern science.

Gadamer assumes that the problem of a method for human sciences is a consequence of serial misinterpretations in traditional metaphysics. This criticism is deeply connected to the broader philosophical discourse on how we understand and relate to the world. As a pupil of Heidegger, Gadamer also challenges the instrumental usage of language, the subject-object dichotomy. He argues that these are significant steps toward the unfortunate dominance of theoretical reason over practical reason. He claims that the instrumental use of language first began with a misunderstanding of Aristotelian *Logos*. He assumes that the scholarly focus on propositional *logos*, *Logos Apophantikos*, among Aristotle's other kinds of *Logos*, was a decisive move on the way to the Enlightenment (Gadamer, 2022, p. xii). This propositional focus, Gadamer argues, separates language from its historical and cultural character and reduces it to only a means of thinking. Even though the concept of *Logos* in Aristotle's quote, "Man is a rational animal," also means man has "speech and discourse," it is translated into Latin as "rationality" (Gadamer, 2022, p. xii). Enlightenment, which admired the capacity of human reason, strengthened this concept's usage. In contrast, Gadamer claims that language is not just composed of a mathematical set of signs belonging to the subject; we should also be able to refer to the totality of language itself, which does not particularly belong to subjects. For example, when we engage in a conversation, what makes communication possible is the totality of what is said and what is heard rather than the separate words.

According to Gadamer, human existence and understanding are fundamentally interpretive and situated within a particular historical context. Thus, when human beings perceive and understand something, a fundamental interpretation is always involved in this process. On the other hand, the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy

requires us to assume that we are the determinant ground for the things around us, even though the objects around us might be illusory. The subject-object dualism in Cartesian philosophy, in which *cogito* is the subject exercising domination over objects, implies a false sense of separateness and control that people assume they have over their surroundings and beings around them. As a result, *cogito*, the subject, gained the power to control the objects around them. However, by assuming an interpretative closeness between human existence and beings, Gadamer rejects a strict conceptualization of subject-object distinction. Gadamer recognizes these attempts as the beginning of the dominance of theoretical reason over practical reason (Gadamer, 2022, p. xii). By this attempt, the objects we control are thought to be completely intelligible, quantifiable, and predictable. The subjects, through their rationality, are capable of instrumentalizing these objects as they wish. Therefore, language has become a tool consisting of signs that express these possessions.

Gadamer argues that the natural sciences have gained control over the conception of truth and knowledge because of the accuracy and measurability of their data. While natural scientists can quickly put their theoretical assumptions to thousands of tests and get accurate results about the world we live in, human sciences, by nature, resist specific predictions about their individual phenomena and processes in the future. Thus, the human sciences have lost their reputation and trustworthiness due to their data's "probable" nature, contrasting with the natural sciences' common reliability. However, Gadamer argues that this is only possible because we judge the human sciences using the scientific method's yardstick (Gadamer, 2004, p. 4).

The separation of psychology as a distinct science from philosophy in the 19th century was fatally crucial for humanities. Even though the branches' data, like those of psychology and sociology, are more qualitative, they also achieve some quantitative data with specific tests and experiments, so it was much easier for them to claim their place as science compared to philosophy, history, and art history. Therefore, the human sciences have only two choices for achieving scientific recognition: either they adopt the natural sciences' methodology to produce more measurable, precise data or risk being less influential in shaping the world's current state. Yet, Gadamer maintains that in humanities, one may find regularities in

predicting future phenomena, but the individual character of any historical event or person will persist. Therefore, the primary purpose of human sciences is not to determine specific rules but to reveal the relevance of a particular present experience. For Gadamer, understanding any individual phenomenon in the human sciences requires engaging with the subject matter in its unique historical context (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 4–5).

If no single method adequately encompasses human sciences, should human sciences then renounce their claim to be scientific? Gadamer claims that Helmholtz's contribution to the search for the method of human science exceeds the scientific quest of method by separating the natural sciences and human sciences' inductive methods from each other (Gadamer, 2004, p. 5). For Helmholtz, while the natural sciences' inductive method seeks to establish general objective principles, the aesthetic inductive method tries to provide general principles from a particular historical event through artistic feeling or tact. Gadamer agrees with Helmholtz's shift from logical induction (Gadamer, 2004, p. 5). However, for Gadamer, even though Helmholtz refers to the superiority of the human sciences, Kant's influence on Helmholtz is evident. To assume that the human sciences depend on subjective notions, such as “artistic induction” and “feeling,” leaves the field of knowledge to logical induction (Gadamer, 2004, p. 5). Although Gadamer appreciates the benefits of the separation of methodologies of natural sciences from human sciences, he criticizes Helmholtz for the fact that he reduces the human sciences' to merely subjective psychological terminology like feeling (Gadamer, 2004, p. 5). Human sciences contain multiple components, including psychological, societal, political, and aesthetic.

Like Helmholtz, Dilthey plays a significant role in the debate on methods for human sciences. Dilthey has an exceptional place for Gadamer because he points to the historicity of humankind rather than an empirical ground for humanities. In *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, Dilthey emphasizes the importance of historical and social aspects of understanding. He argues that human sciences set general principles for human beings through particular “lived experiences.” Also, Dilthey asserts that the methodologies of the natural sciences and humanities are different

from each other. He argues that the natural sciences provide “explanations” of phenomena while human sciences offer an “understanding” of them (Keane and Lawn, 2011, p. 36). For Gadamer, Dilthey’s idea of lived experiences provides a fruitful source for phenomenology and philosophical hermeneutics (Keane and Lawn, 2011, p. 36). However, Gadamer asserts that although Dilthey offers a vast potential for philosophical hermeneutics, he still follows Kant’s footsteps and searches for a systematic understanding of human sciences (Gadamer, 2004, p. 6).

Gadamer argues that Dilthey's methodological quest is also insufficient for understanding human sciences. Once again, he turns to Helmholtz to discuss how crucial the concepts of artistic sensibility, tact, and character development are in producing data in human sciences. For Gadamer, concepts such as artistic sensibility and tact are not only concepts that belong to the subject/genius engaged in the artistic endeavor. According to Gadamer, notions such as tact, taste, and artistic sensibility enable human sciences to be scientific. The scientific community that performs the human sciences also undergoes the necessary self-formation that shapes the individual and the society in which they live. Those engaging in the fields of human sciences need to distance themselves from their individual aims and sensitivities and orient themselves to the universal so that they can understand being human and of themselves and interpret their historical and dynamic data appropriately. (Gadamer, 2004, 15)

For Gadamer, our whole experience of the world is related to our endeavor to understand what is alien to us and what is around us. Therefore, the human sciences, whose task is directly concerned with human beings, are supposed to be the most appropriate platform for understanding and interpretation. In addition, Gadamer criticizes the scientific community for discarding the effects of psychological elements evident in science-making. From the hermeneutical perspective, all scientific questions require pre-conceptions, like the necessary terminology relating to the subjects and natural language, to make this terminology intelligible in the first place. Indeed, even within the natural sciences, some things are beyond the scientists' control. Most conditions, including specific political, cultural, economic, and

historical settings in which scientists conduct their experiments, are typically predetermined. (Gadamer, 2007, p. 5).

The chapter discusses why Gadamer argues that the human sciences, which includes philosophy, art, and history, engaged in a search for a methodology akin to that of the natural sciences. Gadamer points to an inevitable consequence of this dominance: the devaluation of truths derived through immediate experience, judgment, and taste. According to him, once an integral component of human understanding, these concepts have been reduced to being subjectively aesthetic.

Even though Gadamer underlines problems caused by natural science's dominance over the human sciences, he acknowledges the coexistence of human and natural sciences as beneficial throughout his career. In fact, Gadamer recognizes and appreciates the efficiency of using the methodology in the human sciences and accepts the accomplishments in the human sciences thanks to the aid of the scientific method (Gadamer, 2004, p. 4). The essential concern, for Gadamer, is the loss of autonomy for the human sciences, whose scientific dimension exceeds the limits of scientific epistemology. Gadamer is concerned that human sciences are fundamentally distinct from natural sciences as they involve experiences and understanding that extend beyond the scientific method. For him, human sciences are associated with modes of experience outside of science, namely philosophy, art, and history. The methodological tools specific to science cannot verify these kinds of experiences.

Gadamer argues that to justify the truth claims of human sciences and art, which are not limited to method, it is necessary to look at the past relationship of aesthetic concepts with human sciences. In the past, concepts such as taste, artistic sensibility, and judgment not only belonged to aesthetics but also played a role in showing the social aspect of scientific production. For this reason, while exploring traditional aesthetics, Gadamer also closely examined the connection of its concepts with the human sciences. Therefore, this chapter tries to clarify why human science requires the experience of art and aesthetics to regain their truth claim.

## 2.2. Re-enacting with Traditions to Solve the Problem of Method

Chapter 1.1 focuses on the relationship between aesthetics and the problem of a method for human sciences. Let us now continue with how Gadamer attempts to solve the problem of a method for the human sciences. As mentioned earlier, Gadamer argues that overemphasizing the methods of the exact sciences leads to a loss of legitimacy for the human sciences.

Although Gadamer is not as severely critical of natural sciences' method and technology as Heidegger, he agrees with Heidegger that the world's emphasis on positive sciences and technology results in a decline in the relevance of traditions. However, the concept of tradition that Heidegger refers to in the following quotation differs from the traditions that Gadamer prefers to focus on, such as humanism. Nevertheless, Heidegger's words can help to explain the significance of the loss of tradition for human beings in general:

All our relationships have become merely technical ones. It is no longer upon earth that man lives today..... As far as my orientation goes, in any case, I know that, according to our human experience and history, everything essential and of great magnitude has arisen only out of the fact that man had a home and was rooted in a tradition. (Heidegger, 1981, p. 55).

Gadamer argues that the reason why the search for an appropriate methodology for the human sciences has not yet succeeded is due to the attempt to strip these fields of their historicity. According to him, it is impossible to understand and appreciate the authentic contributions of human sciences to science by remaining within the natural sciences' strict rules and inductive methods.

Gadamer asserts that different kinds of truths of art and human sciences were not always regarded as inferior compared to the exact sciences. In discussing the flaws of previous attempts to construct a unified methodology for the humanities, Gadamer argues that certain concepts of humanistic tradition are relevant for understanding human sciences as sciences. He asserts that to understand truths that exceed the limits of the rigid methodological approach of epistemology, we should re-enact with

certain aspects of humanism, rhetoric, and practical philosophy. For Gadamer, the relevance of particular elements of these traditions for the search for methods in human sciences should be recognized even today. However, when Gadamer addresses concepts belonging to these traditions, such as *Bildung*, *Sensus Communis*, judgment, taste, and *phronesis*, it is difficult to distinguish whether he is discussing the views of the philosophers he refers to or putting forth his views.

The article that influences this thesis chapter's name, "Language and Ontology," by Pol Vandavelde, addresses that when Gadamer chooses to employ concepts from ancient philosophy, his purpose is not to "revive or renew Greek philosophy but to engage with their experiences for a better understanding" (Gadamer, 2022, p. xi). Re-enactment, in contrast to revival or renewal, relates to the present rather than the past. Gadamer reevaluates the relevancy of past concepts to provide new views for the present (Gadamer, 2022, p. xi). Through concepts such as *Bildung*, *Sensus Communis*, judgment, and taste, Gadamer re-enacts the traditions of humanism and rhetoric to show how important they are for the human sciences. He argues that traditional aesthetics condemns these concepts to the field of aesthetics and that they have lost their previous relevance to truth.

### **2.3. Judgment & Taste**

Gadamer argues that judgment and common sense had been strongly connected before Kant's intervention. Before Kant excluded taste from the moral realm, humanists considered taste an ability to distinguish rights and wrongs that form the framework of social life and culture. Gadamer stresses that taste historically had more profound characteristics than its contemporary association with individual preferences for art or beauty. It existed not only to distinguish what is pleasurable and beautiful but also to make moral decisions. For Gadamer, taste was a concept that determined what "fit" our judgments in the past (Gadamer, 2004, p. 34). Gadamer asserts that good judgment involves combining what we instinctively know to be right or wrong and skills we learn through education and experience and then applying these correctly in the appropriate situations when needed (Gadamer, 2004, p. 34).

As Gadamer claims, taste was originally a moral concept rather than an aesthetic one (Gadamer, 2004, p. 31). This moral context indicates that taste was strongly correlated with ethical considerations and harmony in social life. Gadamer argues that contemporary usage of taste ignores its historical functions as a commonality between people, guiding social norms and behavior. Gadamer claims that individual taste is open to being judged by society since taste is common to people; it determines them and is determined by them. Therefore, taste is fundamental to an individual context in determining social context (Gadamer, 2004, p. 33). Since taste originally operates within the social and moral realm, judging an individual's taste inevitably necessitates evaluating one's moral understanding. Although individuals' preferences vary, fundamental principles governing individual preferences are inescapably collective. Hence, Gadamer asserts that taste is not purely subjective or reducible to individual preferences abstracted from social implications.

Explaining the cognitive aspect of taste, Gadamer points out that, contrary to the relativism inherent in the modern use of this concept, it involves an “immediate certainty.” What kind of certainty is this? No one is obliged to provide any reason to prove whether something appeals to their tastes (Gadamer, 2004, p. 33). Gadamer argues that the existence of taste can be seen negatively in a person who does not possess it. Therefore, taste is not characterized by its positive but by its negative aspects. According to Gadamer, the fact that taste is understood with its negative rescues it from relativism. Gadamer defines taste as being “unhesitant” about choosing the good. Therefore, since the arguments of the natural sciences are falsifiable, it is more appropriate to think of taste as a more certain kind of knowing than method-dependent knowledge (Gadamer, 2004, p. 35).

To clarify his position, Gadamer refers to the concept of fashion. Since fashion is created by and operates within society, its influence on the concept of taste is substantial. Nevertheless, an individual does not attain good taste through the guidance of fashion. This is precisely where the determinant of good taste emerges. Gadamer defines those who manage to find their own unique style within the offers of fashion as the owners of good taste. An individual with good taste is characterized by self-expression and does not unquestioningly adhere to fashion, which is subject



to customs and traditions associated with society. For someone with good taste, patterns and models from the past are elements to be used only to support their creative endeavors. According to Gadamer, it is better to know about those fashion elements than not to know them at all (Gadamer, 2004, p. 38).

According to Gadamer, although taste and judgment are still crucial for artistic endeavors, they have fundamental cognitive and social connotations. Thus, no overriding principle can completely exhaust judgment and taste. They are essential precisely for the understanding and interpretation of situations. Gadamer points out that this aesthetic element is by no means the most crucial but an inextricable element of taste and judgment. Yet, every occasion involving moral action contains an aesthetic element as a “supplementing principle” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 35). Therefore, the concept of taste operates within all forms of moral decisions (Gadamer, 2004, p. 35).

#### **2.4. Bildung and Sensus Communis**

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Bildung* began to flourish in an atmosphere that considered the power of reason as the determinant of being human. However, the Enlightenment’s over-focus on reason gradually faded because of its inability to define what it is like to be a human being. That is why concepts of tact, judgment, and taste arise from the ashes once again to help understand what it is like to be a human being. In the preface to *Truth and Method*, the translators, Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, point out that the difficulties in reading the book arise not only from the fact that specific terms in German cannot be translated directly into English but also from Gadamer’s resistance to technical terminology (Gadamer, 2004, p. xii). He employs words outside their usual meanings, indicating that they are part of this resistance. The concept of *Bildung* is also one of the words used throughout this book in several distinct parts with different meanings. Gadamer defines *Bildung* as “intimately associated with the idea of culture and designates primarily the properly human way of developing one’s natural talents and capacities” in the first presentation of the concept in *Truth and Method* (Gadamer, 2004, p. 9). This description adequately represents the primary usage of the idea in *Truth and Method*.

Gadamer asserts that “in *Bildung*, there is *Bild*” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 10). He initially refers to the first part of *Bildung*, the *Bild*, i.e., images or pictures. For Gadamer, the *Bild* points to a mystical Christian tradition. For this tradition, human beings are created in “the image of God”; therefore, they must cultivate their sacred nature as a duty (Gadamer, 2004, p. 9). Because all human beings possess the image of God within themselves, *Bildung* also gains a communal context. Yet, Gadamer maintains that when *Bildung* was used in English as “form” or “formation” derived from Latin *formatio* by Shaftesbury, the concept lost one of its essential communal contexts, which goes back to Christian tradition (Gadamer, 2004, p. 10).

Gadamer asserts that Herder was one of the most notable historical figures whose ideas on cultivating human beings by culture offered a solid root for the human sciences to grow in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 8–9). Gadamer claims that concepts such as “self-formation, education, or cultivation” are essential for the recognition of human sciences, and these are also the meanings of *Bildung*. Therefore, for Gadamer, *Bildung* is at the core of the development of human sciences, even though the concept has lost its significance for human sciences over time.

Gadamer also claims that even though culture is essential to *Bildung*, it should not be used interchangeably. For Gadamer, the concept of *Bildung* is a combination of gaining new skills through culture and having a transformative internal look for self-understanding and character development (Gadamer, 2004, p. 9). The person in the process of *Bildung* should try to be good at what they do and be cultivated but also harmoniously have good judgment and character. Gadamer defines the inward characteristics of *Bildung* by quoting from Wilhelm von Humboldt. For Humboldt, *Bildung* is “something both higher and more inward, namely the disposition of mind which flows harmoniously into sensibility and character, from the knowledge and the feeling of the total intellectual and moral endeavor” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 9).

While defining the concept of *Bildung*, Gadamer mentions Kant’s and Hegel’s applications. For Kant, the concept of *Bildung* refers to cultivating our natural capacities, which is a duty to ourselves. On the other hand, Hegel indicates that *Bildung* is not solely reducible to developing natural capacities (Gadamer, 2004, p. 12). For him, going beyond one’s natural capacities is only a part of the process of

self-formation. Between these understandings, Gadamer prefers to stand with the Hegelian understanding of *Bildung*. One of the most crucial reasons why Gadamer chooses to stick to a Hegelian understanding of *Bildung* is that it describes the concept without discarding the educational and historical aspects of forming a cultivated individual.

In Hegelian thought, *Bildung* is divided into practical and theoretical. Practical *Bildung* refers to the “working consciousness” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 12). In this *Bildung*, the individuals’ task is cultivating themselves to grow out of their natural state. Therefore, any skill set that individuals learn enriches their understanding of themselves and their world. On the other hand, theoretical *Bildung* requires overcoming safe and familiar boundaries of particularity and exploring what is alien in universality. Encountering different worldviews enables one to expand one's understanding (Gadamer, 2004, p. 12). This process involves sacrificing desires to rise to the universal.

*Bildung* is a process of character formation that begins before birth and is profoundly influenced by our historical, cultural, and linguistic background. Thus, for Gadamer, since we are born in a particular historical setting with unique customs, traditions, and language, any *Bildung* begins much earlier than gaining skills (Gadamer, 2007, p. 26).

*Bildung* is shaped by the society in which it operates. However, at the same time, educated individuals in *Bildung* transform the society where they reside and establish its rules. This process requires reciprocal and continuous cultivation. Therefore, Gadamer asserts that *Bildung* is never complete; self-formation is a continual process (Gadamer, 2004, p. 15). Furthermore, for Gadamer, *Bildung's* self-formation requires preserving past experiences. Thus, making oneself open to the other, to the universal, and retaining what comes from the past creates a coherent picture of self and communal formation. Gadamer asserts that the significance of tradition points out the conservation of past wisdom, which an educated, cultured person can make relevant to the present (Gadamer, 2004, p. 15). According to Gadamer, educated individuals must maintain a certain distance from themselves and detach themselves from their

own desires and personal interests (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 12–13). With the help of this detachment, they become open to engaging in dialogue with different worldviews. Educated individuals are distinguished by their constant willingness to confront universal ideas that are not settled and their willingness to challenge their ideas.

As stated at the beginning of this thesis chapter, Gadamer states that *Bildung* played an essential role in the atmosphere where the human sciences flourished. The human sciences, as sciences whose data are human-related and practiced by human beings, are inevitably related to concepts such as self-formation and education. Therefore, educated individuals who are in the process of *Bildung* for the advancement of society and their character, as mentioned above, also correspond to human scientists who have the ability of artistic sensitivity, good judgment, and appropriate interpretation in the production of human sciences. Hans-Georg Gadamer emphasizes that unique artistic and historical experiences cannot be fully appreciated or understood if approached in an estranged way. In any case, our artistic evaluations are inherited from our education of human sciences (Gadamer, 2004, p. 3). This perspective underlines the significance of cultural and educational background in shaping understanding of the human sciences through aesthetic elements like taste, judgment, and artistic sensibility. Indeed, the ability to engage and interpret art and history profoundly influences the truth claim of human sciences. For Gadamer, this influence emphasizes the intrinsic link between aesthetic taste, self-formation, and the modern understanding of art, which has never been actually broken.

Referring once again to Helmholtz's views, Gadamer states that the concept of tact plays an essential role in human sciences. He defines tact as the competence to exhibit the proper behavior at the right time. Therefore, it is evident that one cannot consider tact as a definite and fixed type of truth (Gadamer, 2004, p. 14). Gadamer asserts that the nature of truth attained through tact is distinct from that of scientific knowledge, and this differentiation enables us to comprehend the social aspects of the scientific society. Gadamer also refers to the concept of memory, which Helmholtz considers significant for the operation of the human sciences. According to Gadamer, memory is an inseparable part of the "historical constitution of man and *Bildung*" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 14). He argues that memory inherently involves a

“selective process,” where remembering one aspect necessitates the exclusion, or “banishment,” of another (Gadamer, 2004, p. 14). This conceptual framework enables us to correlate memory with the probabilistic understanding of truth within the human sciences. Considering that memory participates in the scientific process, one cannot regard it as a mere psychological element.

Gadamer maintains that commonalities must exist among the people in *Bildung* to ensure agreement and dialogue. Such commonalities correspond to the notion of *Sensus Communis*, which expresses the communal component of *Bildung*. *Sensus Communis* or “common sense” refers to the commonalities of human experience and enables individuals to judge beyond their perspectives to achieve the common good (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 16–17). The rights and wrongs of a society are determined by the structures of the society and its members. Society's shared values, beliefs, and norms prompt *Sensus Communis*. Therefore, the knowledge acquired through *Sensus Communis* is not fixed and mirrors the ever-changing requirements of society (Gadamer, 2004, p. 19). Gadamer argues that *Sensus Communis* and *Bildung* are more efficient than methods for the self-understanding of the human sciences, whose truths depend on scientists' personal formation and proper interpretation (Gadamer, 2007, p. 27).

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer refers to Giambattista Vico's insights in explaining the concept of *Sensus Communis*. In line with Gadamer's project, Vico strongly criticizes his period's over-emphasis on the exact sciences. Thus, Vico also focuses on the truths the exact sciences could not cover. For his project, he chooses to revive rhetoric. Gadamer even regards Giambattista Vico as the “last representative” of the rhetorical tradition. Although rhetoric addresses emotions, Gadamer asserts that it also inherently carries rational argumentation (Gadamer, 2007, p. 27). Vico suggests that “talking well, *eloquentia*” implies not only the “art of speaking” but also saying the right thing at the appropriate time (Gadamer, 2004, p. 17). Individuals should be responsible for educating and cultivating themselves as parts of society. Vico highlights the trivialization of practical reason and the ever-growing significance of theoretical reason as misfortune.

Gadamer highlights the differences between Aristotle's *phronesis* (practical reason) and the Socratic concept of *sophia* (wisdom or theoretical reason) to illustrate the devaluation of practical reason in favor of theoretical reason over time. In *sophia*, the search for truth is characterized by the search for certainty and precision. This is an approach that prioritizes theoretical knowledge. The principles in *sophia* can be universally applied regardless of particular unique situations. On the other hand, *phronesis* employs practical reason for dealing with concrete situations. In contrast to the universal applicability of theoretical laws, *phronesis* recognizes that particular situations may present unique challenges that exceed the predictions of theoretical reason. Gadamer, therefore, suggests that it is insufficient to rely solely on theoretical knowledge to address the human experience of the world. Thus, each situation is unique due to its specific characteristics. Nevertheless, these unique situations subsume under the universal in a broader context (Gadamer, 2004, p. 18). Gadamer re-emphasized the significance of practical reason by drawing attention to the unfair competition between theory and practice. In this way, he offers a more inclusive view of both the theoretical and practical aspects of truth in the concrete human experience of the world. Gadamer asserts that practical philosophy is the only “scientific model” for human sciences with these words:

The Aristotelian project of developing a practical science [praktische Wissenschaft] represents, it seems to me, the only scientific theoretical model according to which the scholarly disciplines that are based on “understanding” [die “verstehenden” Wissenschaften] can be developed and thought through (Gadamer, 2007, p. 28).

As a part of practical reason, *Sensus Communis* determines the scientists' opinions, behavior, and decisions involved in all scientific endeavors. Since the laws and regulations of nature are not applicable to all individual situations, the decisive impact of the social character of the scientific society on scientific activity is crucial. Gadamer's main concern at this point is not science and method itself but the misinterpretation of truths that exceed the domain of scientific method.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE CRITIQUE OF TRADITIONAL AESTHETICS AND AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS

The title of the first chapter of *Truth and Method*, “Transcending the Aesthetic Dimension,” reveals remarkable information about Hans-Georg Gadamer's approach. This title refers to “transcending” the traditional aesthetics that has developed since Immanuel Kant created autonomous aesthetics, which is the final part of his project called “transcendental philosophy.” Gadamer's choice of the term “transcending” to criticize this view is especially noteworthy because of the differences between “transcendent” and “transcendental.” Although the terms “transcendent” and “transcendental” both come from the Latin word “transcendere,” meaning to go beyond or rise above, they first appeared in the language in different centuries and conveyed different meanings (Goris and Aertsen, 2019). While transcendent is derived from trans-*i.e.*, *beyond*, and cendere-*i.e.*, *to climb over*, in the 15th century, transcendental is derived from the Latin ‘*transcendentalis*’ in the 17th century (Douglas, no date). In the *Prolegomena*, to avoid grounding metaphysical questions in something beyond human experience, Kant distinguishes between the “transcendent,” which means what exceeds the scope of experience, and the “transcendental,” which refers to the necessary conditions for a possible experience (Kant and Hatfield, 2004, p. 125). Thus, Kant's distinction underlines that while the ‘transcendent’ goes beyond our experiential capacity, ‘transcendental’ is closely related to structuring experiences.

Kant argues that the objects we experience cannot be known in their essence (Caygill, 1995, p. 399). Instead, our understanding of objects around us is limited to how they appear to us, shaped by the constitution of our minds. This means that our cognitive framework affects our understanding; thus, we cannot claim to know objects in themselves. In addition, Kant provides a priori principles for experiences

and gives them a formal character. Therefore, simply by employing the term “transcending,” Gadamer may attempt to draw the attention of his readers to his concern, that is the “ ahistorical, incorporeal, and formal subjectivity” (Mohanty, 1985, p. 223) of Kantian transcendental philosophy. Even though aesthetics, the primary interest of Gadamer’s investigation in this context, is only a part of Kant’s system, it is convenient to assume that Gadamer chose the term on purpose.

Gadamer assumes that we can only retain the relationship between art, aesthetics, and truth by “going beyond” traditional aesthetics' formal, lifeless principles. He attempts to reconnect with the truths of the human experience of the world, which the scientific method cannot cover, by pointing to the ontological existence of art. Gadamer's view of art challenges the traditional idea that art has no connection to its social and historical context. He argues that art should not be considered completely separate from these aspects and suggests that such an understanding of art would distract us from the genuine experience of art. To “transcend” traditional aesthetics, which is stripped of historicity, Gadamer points to the significant presence of such truths that human beings realize in their transformative encounter with works of art as they try to make sense of their surroundings and themselves in the world.

Although the topics of experience of art and aesthetics are not the primary purpose, they emerge as the starting point of *Truth and Method*. Gadamer even first intended to name his work *Truth and Method* “Art and History” based on the name of his lectures to promote transcending traditional aesthetics and transforming aesthetic problems into the problems of the experience of art. He also considered the name “Event and Understanding” but finally decided on *Truth and Method* (Lynch and Nielsen, 2022, p. xvii).

At a time when confidence in science was at its peak, Alexander Baumgarten introduced the term aesthetics in the 18th century, first as the “science of perception” in his master's thesis. The etymological origin of aesthetics is rooted in “the Greek *aisthesis*, i.e., sensation” (Keane and Lawn, 2011, p. 8). Baumgarten seeks to find cognitive content for grounding aesthetics. His understanding of aesthetics contradicts what Kant intended: according to Kant, aesthetics is a cognitive field that



can be the subject of a science. For Kant, our judgment of taste (or aesthetic judgments) must conform to universal a priori principles. Therefore, according to Kant, for aesthetics to function, it must have its own autonomy outside empirical and moral contexts. The emergence of the autonomy guaranteed to the aesthetics by Kant's initiative establishes the legitimacy of a dimension not covered by the natural sciences. In fact, the autonomy of aesthetic judgment—freeing art from the constraints of conceptual knowledge—is beneficial for developing Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Nevertheless, according to Gadamer, the cognitive character of art and aesthetics should not be ignored.

Although Gadamer devotes almost the entire first chapter of *Truth and Method* to discussing overcoming traditional aesthetics, he addresses that his intention in this work is not primarily about methodology or aesthetics but the ontology itself, with these words:

The intention of the present conceptual analysis, however, has to do not with the theory of art but with ontology. Its first task, the criticism of traditional aesthetics, is only a stage on the way to acquiring a horizon that embraces art and history (Gadamer, 2004, p. 132).

One question remains unanswered: Why did he start his project by overcoming traditional aesthetics? According to Gadamer, overcoming traditional aesthetics serves multiple different purposes. To understand why overcoming it is necessary, let us look at some of Gadamer's purposes: To rescue truth from the domination of the natural sciences, to liberate the human sciences from depending on the methodology of the natural sciences, and to foster their self-understanding, to revive aesthetics, which has lost its philosophical and moral relevance due to the assumption that it has no cognitive aspect, to comprehend the kinship of truth and the experience of art, to recognize how the experience of art is intertwined with hermeneutics, to turn our focus on the experience of art to justify the relevance of contemporary art. To reach these purposes, Gadamer wants to reclaim the practical and communal context of aesthetics by suggesting that aesthetics should reconnect some traditional concepts such as taste, judgment, and *Sensus Communis* and *Bildung*. He also tries to overcome Schiller's concept of play with the anthropological concept of play. By

doing so, Gadamer intends to demonstrate that the experience of art does not solely depend on the subject and that the eventual nature of art has a transformative effect on human beings. In addition, Gadamer argues that the experience of art has a transformative language that addresses all human beings.

According to Gadamer, the concepts of aesthetic consciousness and aesthetic differentiation emerged as a result of an autonomous field of aesthetics. Aesthetic consciousness asserts that we only appreciate a work of art as an aesthetic object, judging it independently of its moral, historical, or cognitive context. From this perspective, one cannot claim any knowledge about the nature of a work of art; one can only know that it evokes specific sensory and emotional responses in the individual who experiences it. As a result, the experience of aesthetic objects is only subjective. Hence, art becomes detached from practical and social aspects over time. Therefore, the concept of aesthetic consciousness paves the way for the autonomy of art. This can be considered a cornerstone for understanding and appreciating art. This also leads to a subjective appropriation of the work of art, to an interest in the work from a private perspective. In contrast to Gadamer's hermeneutic understanding of the experience of art, according to aesthetic consciousness, the work of art only speaks for and of itself. According to this view, aesthetic objects are beings belonging to nature. In other words, this view claims that while works of art are mere appearances of nature, nature retains its reality. Therefore, aesthetic consciousness claims that aesthetic objects are not associated with reality. Gadamer argues that aesthetic consciousness, which emerged when aesthetic taste no longer has a social and moral facet, separates the work of art from its world and all its meaningful contexts (Gadamer, 2004, p. 8).

Aesthetic differentiation is the attitude resulting from aesthetic consciousness. Gadamer explains this concept by asserting that aesthetes distancing themselves from the work of art and recognizing it only as pleasurable ignore the extent to which self-understanding is at work in history and the experience of art (Gadamer, 2007, p. 22). According to Gadamer, art should not be considered completely separate from its social and historical aspects. Understanding art as something completely separated from these aspects distances art from its actual experience. Thus, for Gadamer, the

experience of art, which touches on more than one aspect of human experience, should also address the social element of taste and not be considered purely subjective.

To highlight the social aspect of art and provide a modern instance of aesthetic differentiation, let us examine artistic expressions related to the 7.6 magnitude earthquake on February 6, 2023, in Kahramanmaraş, affecting the nearby cities in Türkiye. Due to technological advancements, social media consumption has become an integral aspect of everyday life worldwide. This has been further strengthened by the expansion of smart devices accessible to almost everyone, regardless of their financial and social status. During the earthquake, social media users across Türkiye, even if they were not present at the earthquake site, attempted to witness the experience and quickly spread news about the event and call for help. Therefore, pictures taken by earthquake survivors were widely circulated on social media. Nevertheless, the works of professional photographers demonstrated a remarkable emotional intensity and transforming effect that differed significantly from those other pictures. Just as Gadamer employed Rilke's line, "You have to change your life!" (Gadamer, 1986, p. 34) to explain the transformative function of art, millions of people across Turkey have experienced a similar common transformative feeling after looking at these photographs.



**Figure 1.** A father holding the hand of his daughter who lost her life under the rubble.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For detailed information, see: <https://gazeteoksijen.com/turkiye/6-subat-depremlerini-anlatan-fotograflar-hayatini-kaybeden-kizinin-elini-birakamadi-169953?sayfa=15>

Following this, four days after the earthquake, some literary artists published poems that tried to demonstrate the devastating impacts of the earthquake from a literary standpoint in a magazine. However, this publication received a considerable backlash from a significant part of society.<sup>2</sup> Although both artistic initiatives co-occur, why did literary artists attract backlash, and photographers did not? Firstly, the expressions used in the presentation of this publication to the public were as follows: “Literary artists wrote about the most striking pictures of the earthquake. Photographs have no language; they cannot speak. But we wanted their voices to be heard this time...” (Karadag, 2023). From my perspective, it is not entirely accurate to declare that such photographs do not have language. The pictures reflect the effects of devastating events without the need for individual linguistic expression. While photographs invite people to participate in their intensely emotional display, they speak only in the language of art. Thus, the pictures speak for society by using a voice of its own.

Addressing sensitive subjects through art requires a delicate approach. On the other hand, presenting a work of art that addresses such a fragile issue to an audience that contains the actual victims of the trauma by maintaining an aesthetic distance from the event and the object, just as in the technique of aesthetic differentiation, demands considerable time. When the appropriate time is not granted to society, no matter how exceptional the work is, there is almost no chance that it will be “heard” by society.

### **3.1. The Relevance of the Critique of Judgment**

Gadamer's involvement with Kant goes back to his student years. Before becoming Heidegger's student, his doctoral thesis advisor was a prominent neo-Kantian, Paul Natorp (Grondin, 2010, p. 92). After meeting Heidegger, he gradually lost his interest in Kantian literature and was influenced by Heidegger's criticisms. Kristin Gresjdal asserts that Gadamer's criticism of the Third Critique attempts to complete Heidegger's criticism of Kantian thought. Gresjdal points out that though Heidegger

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<sup>2</sup> For detailed information, see: <https://bianet.org/yazi/cenazeler-kaldirilmadan-edebiyat-yapilir-mi-274394>

offers criticism for the first two critiques, he never completely criticizes *Critique of Judgment*, and Gadamer deals with what remains absent (Gresjdal, 2007, p. 351).

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Gadamer finds the basis for all the advantages and disadvantages of 19<sup>th</sup> century aesthetics and critically examines several critical Kantian concepts such as taste, genius, beauty, and the ideal of beauty. Although he never refers explicitly to the implications of Kantian aesthetics for the foundation of philosophical hermeneutics, the questions arising from Kant's initiatives strongly influence Gadamer's path. Some scholars like Cynthia Nielsen and Theodore George maintain that Gadamer's engagement with Kantian aesthetics is multi-dimensional. For them, Gadamer "both adopts and adapts" (George, 2016, p. 55) several Kantian concepts to make room for his arguments for philosophical hermeneutics. It is essential to note that Gadamer's critique is not "a total rejection" but a hermeneutical appropriation (George, 2016, p. 55).

In his first critique, Kant consciously utilized the concept of *Transcendental Aesthetics* as distinct from beauty and art. In the epilogue of the same work, he opposed the possibility of the science of aesthetics that his era sought to construct. Still, he later recognized the significance of aesthetics' existence outside theoretical and practical reason. Gadamer is keenly aware of the fact that Kant attempts to provide a normative ground to prevent the problem of relativism caused by aesthetics, which had almost newly emerged in his period. While Kant criticized philosophers of his time, such as Baumgarten, who sought to explore the 'scientific' aspect of aesthetics, he was particularly critical of efforts to employ similar methodologies to those used in the natural sciences to aesthetics. Kant says aesthetic judgments are not based on empirical evidence or logical deductions. According to him, aesthetic judgment requires a kind of justification that theoretical or practical reasons cannot fully capture.

In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant conducts a transcendental inquiry concerning aesthetics. He concludes that taste or aesthetic judgment is also based on a priori principles. Just as Kant's general project aimed to demonstrate and overcome the difficulties of rationalism and empiricism, the same is true for aesthetics. Figures

such as Leibniz, Wolff, and Baumgarten intended to set rational standards for beauty. In contrast, other philosophers such as Hume, Hutcheson, and Burke endeavored to provide objectivity to beauty on empirical grounds (Wenzel, 2009, p. 381). Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten asserts that aesthetic judgments are based on perfecting our senses and that aesthetic tastes are essentially cognitive. He created the science of aesthetics with rational principles (Wenzel, 2009, p. 381).

Gadamer claims that the genesis of philosophical aesthetics is in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. For Kant, aesthetic judgments are not based on the properties of the aesthetic object but on the pleasure the subject experiences. The aesthetic object appears in the harmonious play of understanding and imagination. Therefore, Gadamer maintains that if one cannot attain knowledge about the object, one's feelings become the only source of aesthetic judgment. Gadamer criticizes this subjective feeling of "disinterested pleasure." Consequently, according to Kant, the only thing to be said about the work of art is that it creates a feeling of pleasure in the subject. The basis of this feeling is characterized not by knowledge but by the conformity of the object's representations to our mental faculties.

According to Kant, due to the common structure of human reason, the concept of the beautiful is "universally communicable" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 38). Therefore, we can all talk about our experience of beauty. Kant argues that the communicable character of beauty is not derived from the aesthetic object itself but from the harmony of the cognitive faculties of the subject who experiences it. In Kantian aesthetics, it is impossible to say anything about the aesthetic object itself. Kantian aesthetics also possesses an intersubjective character because of the common structure of human reason. This intersubjective character, in fact, provides an openness for both the moral and the hermeneutical contexts. As a part of nature, human beings still attempt to reach an "agreement" about aesthetic-related issues.

If the pleasure in a given object came first and if the universal communicability of this pleasure were all that the judgment of taste is meant to allow to the representation of the object, this approach would be self-contradictory. For a pleasure of that kind would be nothing but the feeling of mere agreeableness to the senses. So, from its very nature, it would possess no more than private validity,

seeing that it would be immediately dependent on the representation through which the object *is given* (Kant, 2008, p. 48).

Gadamer argues that the primacy of natural beauty in Kant's philosophy is not only a methodological step. This is because Kant asserts that, unlike beauty in art, natural beauty can exist without demanding content. There is no distinction between Kant's object concerning the beauty in nature and art. According to Gadamer, the fact that this distinction remains obscure is quite understandable for the sake of Kant's project.

For Gadamer, the discernment of beauty in nature and art is meaningful only if the pure judgment of taste is overcome (Gadamer, 2004, p. 44). Gadamer states that Kant's understanding of aesthetics, unlike the philosophy of art, has a broader field of application because it treats beauty in art and nature together. However, despite the extent of the field of application, Kant proposes “methodical priority” for natural beauty, pure judgment of taste, and disinterested pleasure (Gadamer, 2007, p. 126). As long as remaining within the limits of this view, Gadamer says, it is impossible to provide a place for most art forms. Gadamer argues that a work of art speaks directly to us because it is made by man and for man, whereas natural beauty has nothing to say to us. Since Kant assigns a methodological priority to natural beauty, the experience of art invariably falls into the realm of “impure intellectualized pleasure.” Although Gadamer admits that Kant goes beyond the natural beauty of art with his concept of the Ideal of Beauty, Kant claims that nature triumphs over art in any case (Gadamer, 2004, p. 44). Yet, Gadamer finds Kant's attempt to rescue aesthetics and art from relativism highly valuable. He agrees with Kant on the universal validity of judgments of taste but differs from him on the justification of these judgments (Gadamer, 2007, p. 195).

Kant refers to the pleasure derived from beautiful examples of floral and ornamental decoration as purely aesthetic pleasure, in contrast to impure intellectual pleasures. Gadamer recognizes that one may not be able to derive this purity of pleasure from a work of art (Gadamer, 2007, p. 126). However, he states that the way nature pleases us is inseparable from the historical and aesthetic context determined by the artists of the specific period. As an example of this phenomenon, he refers to altering the perceptions of landscape and garden art (Gadamer, 2007, p. 126).

According to Gadamer, when we find a natural object beautiful, we do not perceive it as a purely aesthetic object. Finding an object beautiful also depends on the educational formation of the artists of the period in which the work of art was created, their preferred art styles, and the appropriateness of this work to the tastes of the recipients of the period in which the artwork was experienced. Gadamer argues that to comprehend the connection between aesthetics and hermeneutics genuinely, it is necessary to shift the focus from natural beauty to beauty in art. Therefore, Gadamer suggests that the link between aesthetics and hermeneutics is discoverable only by departing from art, not natural beauty (Gadamer, 2007, p. 126).

### 3.2. Judgment & Taste in Kantian Aesthetics

The difficulty of obtaining a universal ground for taste has been one of the major challenges of aesthetics. In a letter to Karl Leonhard Reinhold in 1787, after the preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which Kant attacks the misuse of the concept of aesthetics by Baumgarten and other thinkers of his period, he claims that he has “surprisingly” discovered subjective a priori principle for taste (Wenzel, 2009, p. 381).

If we wish to discern whether anything is beautiful or not, we do not refer to the representation of it to the object by means of the understanding with a view to cognition but by means of the imagination (acting perhaps in conjunction with the understanding) we refer the representation to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The judgment of taste, therefore, is not a cognitive judgment, and so not logical, but is aesthetic—which means that it is one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective (Kant, 2000, p. 41).

As mentioned before, Kant opposed the understanding of his period's aesthetics. Kant's objection to Baumgarten's *cognito sensitiva* stems from the fact that his conception of taste produces cognitive content about aesthetic objects. According to Kant, the conceptual understanding of taste distracts us from its essence. Therefore, taste has the character neither of empirical universality nor empirical subjectivity. For him, taste's universality is based on an a priori subjective universality. Gadamer appreciates Kant's substantial achievement of rescuing art from conceptual obligations. However, giving up art's decisive and transformative effect on



individuals and society also means robbing the work of art of its essence and ignoring the original message and the *Aussage* it carries (Grondin, 2003, p. 23). Gadamer maintains that aesthetic taste no longer has a conceptual character and has ceased to be in the realm of cognition after Kant's contribution to the aesthetics debate. Taste, for Kant, is universal as well as subjective. However, this universality is not cognitive but sensory in character (Gadamer, 2004, p. 30).

When we consider an aesthetic object, it is natural to assume that it is exclusively dependent on one's individual taste and history. Nevertheless, no one denies that something is agreeable about the delight one derives from beauty or recognizing something as beautiful. The commonality in this context is related to the concept of *Sensus Communis* in Kantian philosophy. Kant's notion of *Sensus Communis* results from the commonality of our mental faculties in each individual. *Sensus Communis* comprises all human beings regardless of any external concept, contingent feeling, or individual preference.

However, Gadamer criticizes Kant's approach by saying that Kant seeks to separate taste and *Sensus Communis* from morality. However, Gadamer criticizes Kant's approach, saying that Kant seeks to separate taste and *Sensus Communis* from morality. Gadamer argues that Kant detached the concept of taste from historical and cultural factors and reduced it to a mere "methodology of taste" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 39). According to Gadamer, this approach not only reduces taste to a procedural level but also deprives *Sensus Communis* of its historical and moral dimensions. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 39).

Gadamer asserts that the commonality of taste is still preserved to a certain extent in Kantian aesthetics. Gadamer points out that, according to Kant's view, the development of natural capacities through education is crucial for cultivating the characteristics that distinguish a good society from a bad one. Gadamer notes that Kant also discusses concepts such as "sound understanding" and "cultivated and enlightened mind" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 30). To compensate for the deficiencies of the pure subjective ground for the judgment of taste, Kant still expresses the concept of *Sensus Communis* as something that functions according to a feeling, not a principle.

For Gadamer, the notion of society is preserved only in the realm of aesthetic taste within Kantian philosophy.

As previously stated, Gadamer is highly critical of the conventional notion of aesthetics. According to him, aesthetics, in its traditional sense, conceptualizes art by reducing it into a certain kind of consciousness that distinguishes art from everyday, religious, and social practice. Gadamer refers to taste's historical root in Ancient Greek philosophy, which involves the cultivation of human socialization and moral sense. Human form and essence came to the forefront of Greek art and philosophy. Humans have both a divine and fallible nature. Thanks to their divine parts, they have access to the divinity. Instead of God being an entity that generates everything from nothing, the Greek Gods have the characteristic of craftsmen who transmit their own features to human beings. Therefore, human beings possess divine characteristics both in their human forms and in their moral aspects. Nevertheless, since moral decisions have particularly complex consequences, human beings need to overcome their self-interested individual inclinations to reveal their divine characteristics (Gadamer, 2004, p. 39). This also applies to physical beauty, which is especially prominent in visual arts and sculpture, Gadamer asserts. Physical beauty is among the attributes of the divine. If the gods took themselves as a reference when they created us, our bodies also possess divinity. According to Gadamer, instead of adopting the traditional taste related to individual preferences and specific situations of history, Kant puts forth his purified version in accordance with this origin (Gadamer, 2004, p. 39).

Gadamer asserts that Kant treats aesthetic judgment as a universal notion, regardless of whether it concerns art or nature. This is because there is no difference in terms of aesthetic judgment whether the object belongs to the field of art or nature. In addition, according to Kant, the difference between beauty in art and nature is artificially created. Gadamer believes this view disregards varied art forms and that a unified formal aesthetics cannot encompass them. Therefore, there is no need for a separate analysis of taste in art. Thus, Gadamer argues that Kant's original position is unable to construct a philosophy of art (Gadamer, 2004, p. 39).

Gadamer asserts that the humanist tradition bases the validity of the judgment of taste on receiving recognition from members of the society, which consists of cultivated individuals. In contrast, Kant believes that the validity of the judgment of taste depends on a priori principles. This attempt results in the separation of taste from the sense of society. Gadamer asserts that the communicability and intersubjectivity of taste in Kant are purely formal. This limited concept of taste, according to Gadamer, plays an essential part in isolating art from the moral and cognitive realm (Nielsen, 2023, p. 13). Thus, Gadamer laments that aesthetic taste has been banished from morality, its domain from its very origin. Initially, good taste signified a good society. Therefore, good taste also implies a “mode of knowing,” i.e., knowing the right and the wrong (Gadamer, 2004, p. 33). However, Gadamer argues that in Kantian philosophy, the proof that the commonality of taste doesn't come from actual “knowledge” of such judgments exists. Instead, it's based on the assumption that the concept of good taste “must” be a notion that works the same for everyone (Gadamer, 2004, p. 34).

Gadamer argues that Kant speaks of “intellectual insight” to recognize and assist the aesthetic element in practical judgment (Gadamer, 2004, p. 35). According to Gadamer, individual judgment should not only be considered an instance that subsumes the universal but also be recognized for its peculiar and unique characteristics that any rules and laws cannot fully encompass (Gadamer, 2004, p. 35). Gadamer claims that since a universal set of rules of theoretical reason is not able to capture the individual practical cases themselves, a concept such as tact, which means to act in the right way at the right time, also plays an active role in moral decision-making. Therefore, according to Gadamer, the application of the universal to the individual is enabled not through reason but through an aesthetic concept such as tact. To sum up, Gadamer considers the concept of taste vital for the “completion” of practical judgment (Gadamer, 2004, p. 35).

Gadamer considers “the subjectivization of taste” to be a “turning point”(Gadamer, 2004, p. 36). Providing a subjective transcendental ground for taste led to a distinctive paradigm shift for him. As a result of this paradigm shift, aesthetic judgment, and taste have been excluded from the fields of morality and knowledge to which they once were strongly connected. Gadamer argues that the understanding of

aesthetics, which moved away from the field of concrete experience and lost its social aspects, led to a change in the understanding of truth. For him, the truth has been restricted to theoretical and practical realms due to Kant's attempt. The substantial contributions of aesthetic judgments in the fields of law, religion, and morality have been ignored, and all this has resulted in the reduction of aesthetics to the concepts of the beautiful and the sublime in art and nature.

Gadamer maintains that the Romantic movement, pioneered by Kant, plays a significant role in radicalizing the subjectivization of taste. The Romantic movement, which flourished in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, emphasizes that individual emotions and experiences are the only principles for aesthetic judgment in the composition and reception of a work of art. Even though Romantic thinkers were very much aware of this, for Gadamer, their attempt to escape from scientific methodological constraint experienced a significant backlash. They prioritized the concept of genius in Kant to recover the significance of human sciences. However, according to Gadamer, recognizing that genius derives from individual competence and feelings means, at the same time, acknowledging that the knowledge that human sciences produce is contingent and inferior. Separating human sciences from custom and tradition gradually trivialized *Bildung* (self-formation). Consequently, the human sciences have deprived themselves of their unique features. After Kantian aesthetics, "the subjective life of the artist" and the "disinterested enjoyment of the spectator" gradually became the only factors in the experience of art (Weinsheimer, 1998, p. 265).

### **3.3. Free and Dependent Beauty**

According to Kant, judgment of taste is divided into two: pure and intellectual judgments of taste. These two judgments are distinguished from each other by whether the object of judgment conforms to a concept or not. Pure judgment of taste is based on aesthetic objects that do not depend on a concept, whereas the intellectual judgment of taste is based on an object that conforms to a concept. Kant proposes two separate types of beauty that align with each kind of judgment. For him, the concept of free beauty relates to a pure judgment of taste. Kant argues free beauty

has a capacity to provoke pure judgment of taste that is not influenced by conceptual requirements or practical concerns (Kant, 2008, p. 60).

In the “Analysis of Taste,” Kant provides examples of objects that arouse aesthetic pleasure, such as decorative, ornamental, or good representations of nature. This is because they are “beauty in themselves” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 40). According to Kant, intrinsic beauty is derived from the fact that it can be appreciated without relying on any external concept to define its beauty. Dependent beauty exists for people, is made by them, and is designed according to their needs. Kant asserts that the objects of dependent beauty are restricted by concepts depending on the needs of human beings, which will also restrict the aesthetic pleasure to be derived from them. Kant also points to beautiful gardens and music without text or theme as illustrations. The reason for this is that Kant claims that these forms can present nature 'almost' independently of a concept.

An ideal of beautiful flowers, of a beautiful suite of furniture, or of a beautiful view, is unthinkable. But it may also be impossible to represent an ideal of a beauty dependent on determinate ends, e.g. a beautiful residence, a beautiful tree, a beautiful garden, etc., presumably because their ends are not sufficiently defined and fixed by their concept, with the result that their purposiveness is nearly as free as with beauty that is quite at large (Kant, 2008, p. 63).

Free Beauty presents itself unmediated, unrestricted by human ends. This kind of beauty does not serve any purpose other than itself. Since Kant considers that art has no purpose in itself, he presents all types of art, except for all non-verbal music and ornamental art, as dependent beauty to get out of a relativist position and universalize the beautiful experience. On the other hand, free beauty refers to self-sufficient natural beauty without any purpose. Although both kinds are called beautiful, the priority of free beauty is highlighted. Kant asserts that free beauty already exists regardless of the appreciation of the spectators (Gadamer, 2004, p. 39).

At this point, Gadamer argues that beauty seen in many art forms should be considered as dependent beauty, according to Kant, since they are purposive and dependent on concepts. For Gadamer, dependent beauty, which depends on these concepts, includes all arts, such as literature, fine arts, and architecture. Therefore,

Gadamer states a philosophy of art cannot be derived from Kant's aesthetics, considering that aesthetic pleasure is taken chiefly from free beauty. As the judgment of taste is the realm of the free play of imagination, all kinds of concepts have a restrictive effect on this freedom. Therefore, Gadamer concludes that the concept of beauty in Kant is not based entirely on pure aesthetic judgment but that this pure aesthetic judgment is only a “precondition” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 40).

### **3.4. Genius**

Genius is a concept that Gadamer approaches highly critically, yet he recognizes its hermeneutic potential. As the subjective universality of taste is recognized after the critique of aesthetic judgment, the objects of art fell outside the domain of knowledge. The exclusion of art from the field of knowledge and the transformation of the work of art into a pure object of individual pleasure causes art to become the art of genius. As mentioned before, Kant's primary interest lies not in art but in the beauty of nature and the pleasures it arouses in the subject. Therefore, Kant regards genius as the subject having a unique perspective of nature, thanks to their artistic sensibilities. While the judgment of taste is concerned with both natural and artistic beauty, the concept of genius is related only to artistic beauty.

According to Gadamer, Kant tries to liberate aesthetic judgments from the cognitive constraints of concepts by establishing a priori basis. With this step, Kant liberates the free play of aesthetic judgments from the historicity of the traditional concept of taste. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 44). Gadamer argues that the aesthetic judgment of the beautiful and the sublime serves a more fundamental function than art in Kantian aesthetics (Gadamer, 2004, p. 48). Therefore, according to Gadamer, the concept of genius has a special role in Kant's philosophy: finding a meaningful space for art. This is because Gadamer asserts that concepts such as genius and the ideal of beauty enable Kantian aesthetics to go beyond the concept of the pure judgment of taste.

Kant's introduction of genius serves several vital functions in aesthetics. By stressing genius, Kant highlights the role of creativity and authenticity in art and suggests that the genuine value of a work of art lies in its capacity to offer new insights. Gadamer

claims that genius challenges the rigid rules of society with a spirit of innovation and originality. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 46). For him, the concept of genius facilitates the play of the mental faculties and enhances the harmony of imagination and understanding. For Gadamer, genius enables the free play of mental faculties to be communicable through the aesthetic ideas they produce. Also, Gadamer asserts that for Kant, the artworks of the genius are not imitable. They cannot be reproduced.

Kant states that “nature prescribes rules for art through genius” (Kant, 2008, p. 137). Gadamer asserts that with this attempt, genius rescues art from being completely trivialized in the face of nature. For Gadamer, genius is capable of experiencing artistic and natural beauty as unified. Natural beauty is the visibility of the concept of purposiveness in nature. Therefore, pure judgment of taste is, in fact, the fundamental ground of the *Critique of Judgment* (Gadamer, 2004, p. 48). What genius accomplishes is to align the work of art with nature. Therefore, we must be able to look at art as nature, which is achieved by nature assigning rules to art through genius (Gadamer, 2004, p. 48-50). According to Gadamer, beauty in nature does not speak as directly as in the work of art. For this reason, Gadamer supports Hegel's view that beauty in nature is only an illusion and that this beauty gains a meaningful language when nurtured with the imagination of people who have received the necessary training in art (Gadamer, 2004, p. 51).

Whereas taste is concerned with beauty in art and nature, genius's sphere of activity is limited to beauty in art (Gadamer, 2004, p. 46). Gadamer points out that despite the strong emphasis on genius in art, the concept of taste still has a predominant role in Kant's philosophical framework. Gadamer claims that the concept of taste can sometimes have a limiting effect on the creativity of genius. However, taste is also necessary for a genius to create art. According to Gadamer, if there is a conflict between these two concepts according to Kantian philosophy, the concept of taste will likely prevail (Gadamer, 2004, p. 46).

Gadamer states that Romantic philosophers shifted the focus of natural beauty in Kantian philosophy to the concept of genius to derive a philosophy of art from Kantian aesthetics. This shift represents a departure from the traditional, formal

aesthetics of taste, which prioritizes form and harmony, to an emphasis on the unique gift of the artist as a genius. Hence, formal aesthetics of taste became less relevant after Kantian aesthetics because of the tendency to focus on art. According to Gadamer, Kant's shift from a pure judgment of taste to the concept of genius is not a shift in focus but a strategic move to enhance and complete his philosophical project. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 51). Gadamer argues that the assumption that the artist, as a “subject,” has complete control over the context, meaning, and experience of the “object,” the work of art, restricts the free play of art. The conception of art as solely belonging to the genius traps art in the original contexts and intentions of the genius. Thus, Gadamer claims that the prominence of genius paves the way to relativism as the subject's pleasure begins to determine the concept of taste.

### **3.5. Ideal Beauty**

Gadamer asserts that for Kant, only the human form possesses ideal beauty (Gadamer, 2004, p. 43). The human form conveys the competence for moral action within itself. As a being capable of reason and moral action, humankind stands out from other beings by bearing a moral aspect in its form. Gadamer regards the notion of ideal beauty as one of Kant's most essential concepts, which liberates him from the entirely problematic pure judgment of taste. Therefore, Kant's concept of ideal beauty offers a way to establish a hermeneutical potential in Kant, which is understood and experienced as a dialogical, communicative event thanks to its cognitive character (Nielsen, 2023, p. 3).

Beauty emerges as conformity to the end of our pleasure. Nature provides us with a clue to the true purpose of creation. In man's social and goal-directed world, it preserves its “innocence” with its purposeless beauty (Gadamer, 2004, p. 45). The human form that presents itself through beauty encounters an aspect of itself in nature. The significance of the work of art is only associated with this confrontation and dialogue, while nature continues to exist outside of human beings and their purposes. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 45).

By encountering beauty in nature, which serves no purpose outside itself, man also encounters his moral side and the purpose of nature's creation. Kant defines this as



“purposiveness without a purpose” (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 44–45). Gadamer asserts that in Kantian aesthetics, the purposiveness of nature and the harmony of disinterested pleasure with nature point to us the real purpose of “creation” – the moral aspect of our being. Therefore, it serves a theological purpose. According to Gadamer, the ideal of beauty, in conjunction with Kant's later doctrines of “aesthetic ideals” and “beauty as the symbol of morality,” say something about art (Gadamer, 2004, p. 42). Thus, this concept of Kant complements Gadamer's hermeneutics since he tries to give credit to different kinds of art forms.

Gadamer's view is that a work of art that has no intention of enabling human beings to confront themselves cannot speak to us. Gadamer argues that art has a non-arbitrary manner of speaking that is not open to misinterpretation.

Contrary to Kant's assertion, Gadamer argues that the cognitive aspects of the work of art do not constrain free play but, on the contrary, open a room for it. Each time human beings encounter a work of art, a truth that has not been told by the work of art before is revealed to them. The representation of natural objects in art also expresses moral ideas, but this representation is merely a borrowing of human qualities. Gadamer gives the example that when the tree shedding its leaves is characterized as sad, its inherent sadness is borrowed as a human condition, not a quality inherent in itself (Gadamer, 2004, p. 43). Gadamer asserts that with this concept, Kant provided space not available to different art forms by remaining within the boundaries of the pure judgment of taste. By the moral aspect that the human form embodies, art does not only portray “the ideals of nature” but also enables human beings to encounter themselves in nature (Gadamer, 2004, p. 43).

### **3.6. Erlebnis and Erfahrung**

Gadamer refers to the post-Kantian atmosphere by asserting that paradigm change took place by emphasizing the possession of art by genius, trivializing the concept of natural beauty, and intensively focusing on the subjective and creative expressions of genius in the fine arts. As a result of the intensification of the concept of genius in art, the concept of *Erlebnis* gained “popularity” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 54).

Hans-Georg Gadamer points out that the unity that art once formed with the religious and social context is no longer firm and that this shift became evident in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Within the 19<sup>th</sup> century's understanding of art, the rise of positivism and the gradual loss of the divine qualities in the concepts and traditions with which the artist had been familiar influenced the artist's self-evaluation of his worth and role in society (Gadamer, 1986, p. 7). During this period, the ties between the artist and the values promoted by society and the church decreased. Gadamer asserts that:

So long as art occupied a legitimate place in the world, it was clearly able to effect an integration between community, society, and the Church on the one hand and the self-understanding of the creative artist on the other. Our problem, however, is precisely the fact that this self-evident integration and the universally shared understanding of the artist's role that accompanies it no longer exists and indeed no longer existed in the nineteenth-century (Gadamer, 1986, p. 6).

In this period, artists emphasized private experience and subjective interpretation more. This shift implied a transition from art as an expression of shared social values and divine beauty to art as a profoundly individual act of creation. By focusing on the unique, individual process of transforming their aesthetic ideals into art, artists attempted to resist surrendering to an increasingly homogenized mass culture.

The concept of *Erlebnis* has a “dual function” between the immediacy of lived experiences and their residues on the “totality” of life. *Erlebnis* demonstrates that the effects of experiences on human consciousness are enduring, constantly evolving, and endless (Gadamer, 2004, p. 54). The concept originates from the elements of lived experience in the poetry of Goethe. The biographer of Goethe, Hermann Grimm, coins the term “*Erlebnisse*,” the plural form of *Erlebnis*, to show how closely Goethe's poems and his own experiences were linked to his artistic initiatives.(Gadamer, 2004, p. 54) Thus, this concept was exceptionally significant for the biographical literature of artists from different genres of art.

Gadamer argues that experiencing art goes beyond a private adventure. This process signifies the inevitability of undergoing a transformation when one encounters a work of art (Gadamer, 2004, p. xiv). The analysis of the transformative force of the work of art appears explicitly in the passages where Gadamer questions the concept

of *Erlebnis*, an essential concept for the romantic philosophers, and speaks of the concept of *Erfahrung* instead. *Erlebnis* can be understood as experiences or adventures that emphasize the subjective and plural aspects of how artists consider their world of experience. However, Gadamer finds this perspective limiting when it comes to understanding the total influence of art. Yet, he introduces the concept of *Erfahrung*, which captures the idea of a singular and profoundly transformative experience. In contrast to the plural character of *Erlebnis* as experiences of artists, *Erfahrung* refers to the peculiar experience of art (Gadamer, 2004, p. xiv). According to this view, the experience of art offers a unique, singular experience that transforms the participant, providing a deeper understanding and engagement with the world.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ONTOLOGY OF ARTWORK

The chapters up to this part of the thesis discuss Gadamer's pursuit of truths that defy the methodological constraints of natural sciences. These chapters propose that certain concepts of the humanist and rhetorical traditions, such as *Bildung*, *Sensus Communis*, judgment, and taste, which have been forgotten in the grip of scientism, play an active role in acquiring and producing these different kinds of truths embedded in “understanding-related” fields. Gadamer realizes that the recovery of the concepts of practical reason and humanism contributes to understanding the human sciences. However, according to Gadamer, to be liberated from methodological constraints, different truths, including those of art and the human sciences, require first questioning the mode of being of art. However, the definition of truth that artwork conveys and its significance for the operation of human sciences is still uncertain before Gadamer explains the ontological status of artwork. Gadamer resolves this ambiguity by exploring the ontological status of art; he argues that understanding a work of art requires recognizing its existence as an indispensable part of human understanding and experience.

Gadamer argues that the ontological status of the work of art extends beyond the traditional notion of aesthetics. He believes that genuine engagement with art reflects a fundamental aspect of how human beings interpret the world around them. Art plays a significant role in our ability to understand and engage with various forms of truth. This perspective suggests that art is not for individual pleasure but contributes significantly to our understanding of the world and ourselves.

Gadamer considers the neglect of the cognitive aspect of art by traditional aesthetics to be a great misfortune. For him, the experience of art is the most direct medium of

self-understanding within the entire experience of meaning. Therefore, it is always content-related and cognitive. That is because the encounter with a work of art always remains decisive and transformative for the human being who interprets the world through language. Indeed, for Gadamer, genuine comprehension of different kinds of art is not something that can only occur by remaining within the confines of formalist aesthetics. Rather, Gadamer implies that art's genuine meaning and value emerge in a direct, captivating encounter of the human being with the work of art. By emphasizing the interplay between the spectator and the work of art, this approach suggests that art is not only about understanding its form but also about the experience of its vivid reality (Gadamer, 2004, p. 40).

Since Gadamer, like Heidegger, opposes the traditional subject-object distinction, he states that the work of art is not an object that the subject experiences and appreciates in the experience of art. Therefore, questioning the mode of being of artwork requires not asking questions about the mindset and intention of the creator of a work of art or the recipient of a work of art seeking pleasure as traditional aesthetics attempts. Kant asks how the experience of art fails to be an object of knowledge, which is an epistemological question, even if art itself offers no knowledge. Still, the question Gadamer asks about the essence of the experience of art is instead an ontological question.

#### **4.1. Play**

Precisely at this point, Gadamer reintroduces the concept of play to resolve the problem of overcoming traditional aesthetics. Gadamer regards play as an inseparable component of human experience, operative in all cultural, religious, and everyday human practices. He attempts to overcome the subject-object distinction produced by aesthetic consciousness with the concept of play by asserting that play demonstrates itself as the sole determinant. Gadamer mainly proposes the concept of play against one of the essential representatives of the concept of aesthetic consciousness, Friedrich Schiller, and his conception of “free play” (Grondin, 2001, p. 43). As a part of the romantic philosophy movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Schiller, a poet and philosopher, addresses the concept of play in relation to art. Schiller's play

is the play of the subject, and in this play, the subject is in a free play liberated from theoretical and practical knowledge relations. His understanding of free play is based on the harmony in the subject's mental faculties (Gadamer, 2004, p. 102).

Gadamer refers to both the metaphorical and modern anthropological conceptions of play. For Gadamer, this understanding of aesthetic consciousness emphasizes the methodological priority of the metaphorical use of the concept of play. While this understanding provides an abstract background, Gadamer asserts that it cannot fully cover the original nature of the play (Gadamer, 2004, p. 103). Gadamer's concept of play is far from a mere metaphor; play is a dynamic notion in the reception and production of artwork. The surpassing of the individual preferences and emotional states of the artist and the viewer in the concept of play offers a more comprehensive existential framework intimately related to the experience of art than the aesthetic consciousness. "The mode of being of the work itself" is also apparent in the concept of play along with the subjective aspects (Gadamer, 2004, p. 87).

Gadamer addresses the anthropological basis of our experience of art by developing this experience by referring to the concepts of play, symbol, and festival. Huizinga's anthropological understanding of play is his first and most comprehensively examined notion. Gadamer mentions Huizinga's anthropological perspective of the conception of the game in opposition to aesthetic consciousness's metaphorical usage of play for methodologic reasons (Gadamer, 2004, p. 104).

According to Huizinga's perspective, play is characterized by its movement, which does not seek to reach an end but instead renews itself in constant repetition. In the back-and-forth movement of the game itself, the players no longer feel that they are playing (Gadamer, 2004, p. 104). These movements arise from the dynamics inherent in the essence of the play itself. This implies that the nature of a play is not to be found in the playful behavior of a subject but in the movement inherited in the play itself, highlighting its mode of being (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 104–105).

Unsurprisingly, Gadamer, while addressing the notion of play, offers arguments to prevent it from being regarded as an arbitrary, unserious concept. For Gadamer, play

carries a seriousness in itself, surpassing the player's intention to act seriously (Gadamer, 2004, p. 102). As a serious event, the play represents itself. Gadamer expresses this representation as a notion of “excess” (Gadamer, 1986, p. 23). This excess is observable in the playfulness of play in nature, like in “the play of light” and “the play of the waves” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 104). Gadamer defines the excess in play’s movements: “The movement backward and forward is obviously so central to the definition of play that it makes no difference who or what performs this movement” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 104). For him, “play is not to be understood as something a person does” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 104). It is rather actualized when it is actually being played.

Play is often seen as a separate space where people are both physically and conceptually free from mundane tasks and commitments. However, Gadamer asserts that playing is essentially a natural process. Humans are a part of nature; when playing, they are involved in this process (Gadamer, 2004, p. 106). However, human play is unlike other plays in nature and incorporates rule-preserving and rule-following characteristics due to their reason. Even if it has no particular purpose in the play itself, it appears as if specific purposes are at work in human play (Gadamer, 1986, p. 23). Therefore, play provides a free space within its own structure in which players are assigned different roles and tasks. This insight reveals the play as a serious field of possibilities, offering the player a liberated but constrained space. This realization reveals that the play's established boundaries and structures regulate its movements and possibilities. This self-regulatory nature of the game provides its participants with relief. Their tasks are outside of ordinary work; the play offers them a sense of purpose. The closed nature of the play area also implies that the process of understanding and interpretation is not arbitrary; instead, they are open to endless reappraisal in conformity with the play's structure.

Gadamer asserts a strong connection between a successful play and the player's absorption in it (Gadamer, 2004, p. 103). He argues that “the structure of play absorbs the player into himself, and thus frees him from the burden of taking the initiative, which constitutes the actual strain of existence” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 105).

Within this closed structure of the play, players participate in free movement within the rules assigned by the play, making their moves and losing themselves in the game.

Gadamer states that the concept of representation in the play signifies more than representation of the individual. In the play, the individuals represent not only themselves but are also concerned with “representing someone else” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 111). Thus, this representation of someone else in the play invites the spectators to participate in the closed, rule-filled world of the play. The rules of the play itself surpass the consciousness and aims of the individuals participating in it.

Therefore, the determinant factor in the play and the experience of art is the play, which sets the conditions for both the players and the spectators. In Gadamer's concept of play, it is evident that the spectator signifies the recipient community of art and that the creators of the work of art are among those who play the game. The play becomes repeatable and permanent thanks to the play's players and recipients, who are equipped with tradition and self-formation.

Gadamer states that the recipient of art does not experience the artwork as a passive object of pleasure but interacts with the artwork as a participant in the event. Such a framework challenges the traditional subject-object dichotomy in art. The concept of play covers a broader understanding of existence, extending its reach beyond mere human subjectivity. The complex back-and-forth dynamic in play illuminates the essence of the concept, whereby the play, rather than the players, determines the interaction.

Recognizing that the mode of being of the play does not depend on the player's consciousness means, according to Gadamer, acknowledging that the “mode of being of the work of art” also does not rely on the artist either. He asserts that “the subject of the experience of art is not the subjectivity of the person who experiences it, but the work itself” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 102). Just as the best or worst moves of the players only determine their fate in the play, they cannot change the nature and rules of the play, and in the work of art, the consciousness of the artist cannot surround the work of art. Thus, according to Gadamer, the eventual structure of the human play



rescues art experience from the sharp distinction drawn by aesthetic consciousness between a process of artistic creation, individual expression, and community.

When the spectators follow the play as active participants, they become an integral part of it. (Gadamer, 1986, p. 25). The play's gravity on the playgoer and the emotional integrity it generates cannot be dismissed. Gadamer constructs the common point in all plays, whether people participate or not, through inward movement, permanence, and participation. When we define art experience as a playful event, art gains a more accurate understanding, Gadamer asserts. For him, the artificial constraints of subjectivity, objectivity, and existence become indefinite, allowing for the understanding of art as an endless dialogue between its artwork, its artist, and the spectators with the concept of play.

#### **4.2. Festival**

As Gadamer explains, while defining the concept of play, the spectators, like the players, are participants in the play, and the constituent of the play is not the subjects but the play itself. While analyzing the playful structure of the art experience, Gadamer describes the participation of both the spectators and the players in the play with the concept of a festival. Therefore, from this perspective, aesthetic participation is a “communal activity” with the spectators and players participating in the same event. (Davey and Nielsen, 2023)

For a better explanation of the concept of the festival, let us return to the myth of the creation of women by revisiting Ancient Greek mythology. Before the creation of women, men lived in a world without birth and death, where they could meet the gods at festivals. Prometheus, as a titan, craftsman, and teacher of men, was responsible for the equal distribution of portions of flesh between gods and men at a festival. Prometheus, who tricked Zeus into giving humans a larger portion of this distribution of flesh and then gave fire to cook it, was sentenced to be chained to a mountain, and his liver, an organ that regenerates, was repeatedly eaten forever. Pandora, the first woman, was created as a supposed gift to Prometheus' brother, Epimetheus. She was created with a contradictory, surprising, curious, and

provocative nature. However, according to the narrative, the woman was created not as a gift but as a punishment. Following the woman, human beings were introduced to birth and death at once, and the gods ceased to attend human festivities. Having met the terrifying face of birth and death, human beings had to bear the tragic burden of life when confronted with the fact that life is too short to do nothing. They met the “work” to fulfill their basic demands so that they could avoid death as far as possible. Work, although always pointing to the challenging facets of life, has become an inseparable part of being human ever since. Therefore, with the introduction of “labor,” festivals have been disrupted.

Gadamer mentions that work characteristically separates human beings from each other. In the presence of work, individuals pursue their mundane tasks and personal obligations. Even if cooperation exists within the work territory, the individuals mainly work for themselves. Meanwhile, the festival facilitates gathering these segregated individuals together in a definite place and time (Gadamer, 1986, p. 40). Gadamer draws attention to the peculiarity of the celebration at the festival. According to him, this uniqueness emerges from its connection with past occasions, making the festival experience closer to the art experience. Participants unquestioningly perform the “habitual” attributes from their past experiences of festivals in the celebration.

Gadamer argues that festivals are not composed of segregated instants, even though they occupy a specific time for celebration in the calendar. The festival has its own temporality with its customary features. It is not part of the regular passage of time. At the festival, people do not need to fill their “free time” because the festival does not leave a gap with its own celebration activity.

### **4.3. Symbol**

Gadamer explains the concept symbol by referring to the Greek token of remembrance. He refers to this token as Greek *symbolon* and Latin *tessera hospitalis*. In Greek tradition, this word refers to an object divided into two equal parts and handed over to a guest. The other half is returned to the host years later by a

descendant of the host to reunite the object into a whole (Gadamer, 1986, p. 31). This tradition also manifests as *divisi ma sempre uniti*, “separated, but always together” in Latin. This concept means that even in the modern world, people who are not always together can be united through an act of integration and recognition.

According to Gadamer, while allegory denotes presenting something with something else, in the experience of a symbol, the phenomenon in question appears as a part of a being along with all the other phenomena that complement and complete it (Gadamer, 1986, p. 32). Therefore, the parts of a symbolic net seek to be completed. Gadamer asserts that

The meaning of art in this sense does not seem to me to be tied to special social conditions as was the meaning given to art in the later bourgeois religion of culture. On the contrary, the experience of the beautiful, and particularly the beautiful in art, is the invocation of a potentially whole and holy order of things, wherever it may be found (Gadamer, 1986, p. 32).

If we intend to look closely at this quote, we can realize that Gadamer explains this with reference to Plato's *Philebus*, which is an indispensable fragment of his research. In this dialogue, beauty, which is considered together with measure in Plato, takes place as “the refuge of the Good.” Beauty is considered an element of the whole, i.e., the Good; Proportion and Truth are the other constitutive elements (Bury, 1897, ll. 64e–65a). Thus, Gadamer asserts that what is peculiar to art is “the symbolic character” each work embodies, which hermeneutically applies to all things. Art offers itself as a continuous presence and holds its message for the future (Gadamer, 2007, p. 129).

#### **4.4. Aesthetics and Understanding**

The present chapter emphasizes the interplay between aesthetics and the notion of understanding, which stands as a cornerstone in Gadamer's philosophy. One might suppose that hermeneutics has no relation to aesthetics, assuming it is restricted to resolving textual disagreements. I would like to clarify why there is a separate chapter about the relationship between aesthetics and understanding since Gadamer mentions the urgency of understanding in detail in the later parts of *Truth and*

*Method*, which may look irrelevant to the primary purpose —aesthetics and philosophy of art at first glance. A separate chapter on the relationship between aesthetics and understanding is essential for exploring how Gadamer relates aesthetics to the development of philosophical hermeneutics and the truth claim of art and human sciences. The inquiry attempted here concerns not only Gadamer's critique of traditional aesthetics but also explores the way in which aesthetics has been relevant to his philosophy.

The first part of *Truth and Method* focuses on the question of traditional aesthetics. In this chapter, he first introduces the problems of aesthetics and aesthetic consciousness. Later, Gadamer continues by pointing to the dominance of the natural sciences over truth, the failure of efforts to provide a unified method for the human sciences, and the assertion of artworks as claiming truth. Gadamer maintains that the genesis of the problem of the method is the very creation of traditional aesthetics. With his hermeneutical attempt, Gadamer endeavors to recover the truth of both works of art and human sciences, especially historical studies. Gadamer turns his attention from aesthetics to human sciences and history in the later part of the book, which includes the relevance of *understanding* for his philosophical hermeneutics. Nevertheless, what is Gadamer's essential purpose behind everything he mentions in *Truth and Method*? Why is his philosophy still known as hermeneutics?

Gadamer asserts that the experience of art, like understanding, is not something that is under our control. It is “an event” that transforms all participants, artists and spectators. One of the crucial commentators of Gadamer, Jean Grondin, asserts that Gadamer's concept of play, explained in detail in Chapter Three, resonates with Heidegger's notion of being “thrown into existence,” *Geworfenheit* (Grondin, 2003, p. 17). As we have been thrown into existence “from elsewhere,” we come into being in the game as a part of it. Moreover, understanding is not an “activity of mind”; we are exposed to it as part of the game (Grondin, 2003, p. 18). This resonance makes it easier to understand why Gadamer started *Truth and Method*, his magnum opus, with the question of aesthetics.

But first, let's start with understanding. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is all about understanding— understanding the other in particular. In principle, this is what

hermeneutics has been trying to do since it first appeared. To resolve disagreements, to build bridges between minds and texts. In the foreword, Gadamer states that *Truth and Method* is about understanding, and this understanding should not be merely attached to the concept of understanding that is evident in the human sciences. He claims that hermeneutics has also been concerned with all kinds of “understanding” since its emergence (Gadamer, 2004, p. 4). Gadamer paves the way for his thoughts at this stage: hermeneutics has always existed as long as there is understanding.

Gadamer claims that hermeneutics especially relates to hearing and understanding the voice of others. According to him, Biblical hermeneutics, legal hermeneutics, in which judges apply theoretical laws, and the hermeneutics that tried to ensure transmission of accurate meaning when the ancient Greek text was translated into Latin have always wanted the same thing: to make understanding possible and to eliminate disagreement (Gadamer, 2004, p. 4). However, according to Gadamer, classical hermeneutics overlooks that the possibility of understanding stems not primarily from the incomprehensible but from the fact that understanding is always possible. Gadamer attempts to present the flaws of the modern conception of understanding rather than set rules for it. He aims to show how understanding functions in actual situations.

Despite Gadamer’s criticism of the epistemological search for foundations for understanding, he is not an “anti-foundationalist” (Grondin, 2003, p.17). Gadamer argues that the epistemological search for a foundation of understanding cannot capture “a foundation so fundamental that it escapes the whole search for a foundation” (Grondin, 2003, p.17). Understanding—understanding others in particular—is the foundation. Gadamer is not opposed to establishing some principles for understanding. Nevertheless, for him, every understanding is beyond any technical disposition. For him, understanding is not something one does but an “event.”

Gadamer claims that human beings' whole experience of the world emerges through the mediation of language, which allows for understanding and interpretation. Within the experience of the world, there is no path that does not involve understanding.

Human beings understand the things around them through language, and since understanding involves all forms of human engagement with the world, it resists all forms of methodological fixation. Thus, Gadamer asserts that a purely scientific epistemological perspective can never fully capture understanding. Additionally, Gadamer mentions one of the leading figures in developing philosophical hermeneutics, German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher. Before Schleiermacher, hermeneutics was only about interpreting what was already given, and understanding was not a part of the process. However, he realizes the misinterpretations and misunderstandings that occur naturally. Therefore, Schleiermacher's hermeneutics arise from a need to eliminate the evident misunderstanding in texts and discourse. Gadamer strongly opposes basing hermeneutics on a misunderstanding. Instead, he assumes that human beings are naturally inclined to be "in agreement" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 444).

For Gadamer, every interpretation means revealing or unveiling the truth that was once in concealment. Every interpretation is also a dialogue in which people understand each other. According to Gadamer, understanding is an event that completely transforms and educates one. Dialogue is possible because there is always the possibility of a prior linguistic agreement, whether people understand each other in reality. Therefore, the process of understanding has already begun long before the actual agreement.

Next, let us consider Gadamer's views on understanding in Heidegger's thought. Without doubt, Heidegger is one of the most prominent figures whose ideas provide the necessary conceptual background for Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer himself mentions the essential impact of Heidegger's *Being and Time* on his concept of understanding several times. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger presents the relationship between understanding, language, and human beings and defines Dasein as a hermeneutic being. He asserts that language is "the house of Being," and Dasein is the resident of the house (Heidegger, 1977, p. 193). Therefore, Dasein connects with Being and beings through the existence of language. From this perspective, it is impossible to think of language as a mere tool. Also, truth cannot be conceived as the linguistic production of the subject; for Heidegger, the event of

truth, *alethia*, is not entirely encompassable, and something always remains concealed. When something is understood, there is something that remains unrecognized. This conception of understanding can be considered one of the initial points of Gadamer's hermeneutics. There are still multiple vital intellectual crossroads between Heidegger and Gadamer. The obvious Heideggerian vocabulary, such as *Dasein*, the criticism of subject-object dichotomy, the ontological status of art and understanding, and *alethia* are also essential concepts and questions for the philosophy of Gadamer.

Throughout his career, Gadamer is worried about being under the shadow of Heidegger, yet he cannot escape being recognized as closely following the path of his teacher. Even though there are multiple notable differences between the two, Habermas describes him as an "urban Heidegger" (Habermas, 1981). In fact, Heidegger includes Gadamer's efforts to identify origins and use of terms such as effective consciousness in metaphysics and prefers the "magical forest of poems" to the urban life of philosophy. Yet, Gadamer continues on the road to the city by remaining in the field of philosophy and particularly in science. Heidegger's route departs from the path of traditional philosophy since, according to him, in the metaphysical journey that began with Plato and lasted until Nietzsche, the essential questions addressed to Being by the pre-Socratic philosophers have been forgotten by traditional philosophers with the well-known 'turn' in his philosophy. After the so-called 'turn' evident in his criticism of technology and his essays on the origin of works of art, Heidegger becomes more concerned with the question of Being and the criticism of traditional metaphysics. Therefore, *Dasein* seemingly lost its primary place alongside language and Being. For Heidegger, the history of philosophy must be "deconstructed" to turn to the essential questions of Being. He claims that the subject-object dichotomy of Cartesian philosophy, the instrumental use of language, and thus the transformation of thinking into an act of the mind only distanced philosophy from the question of Being. Hence, Heidegger asserts that philosophy had lost its former decisive position to science (Heidegger, 1981, p.55).

Due to his radical attitude in his criticism of metaphysics and his belief that the search for all kinds of origins belongs to the domain of metaphysics in his search for

truth, he turns to poetic discourse, which still carries a primordial truth relation free from the conceptual constraints of modern epochs. Heidegger's most crucial figure when discussing poetics is undoubtedly Friedrich Hölderlin, a German poet and philosopher. However, Gadamer also refers to another figure whose discourse is “magical”: Stefan Georg (Gadamer, 2007, p. 9) Stefan Georg significantly impacts both Gadamer and Heidegger after the Turn. In fact, according to Jussi Backman, “Das Wort” is the poem that started the Turn (Backman, 2011, p. 50).

The Word  
Wonder or dream from a distant land  
I carried to my country's strand  
And waited till the twilit norn  
She had found the name within her bourn-  
Then I could grasp it close and strong  
It blooms and shines now the front along...  
Once I returned from happy sail,  
I had a prize so rich and frail,  
She sought for long, and tidings said:  
“No like of this these depths enfold.”  
And straight it vanished from my hand,  
The treasure never graced my land...  
So I renounced and sadly see:  
Where word breaks off no, no thing may be  
(Backman, 2011, p. 50)

In the poem, the poet embarks on a journey and carries a prize from an unknown land to his land. In verse 3, he uses the symbol 'twilit Norn,' a symbol from Nordic mythology.<sup>3</sup> The Norns are three sisters known to represent birth, life, and death. They are also responsible for watering Yggdrasil, the tree of life, by drawing water from their wells. Norn's search for a name for the word in her well can be analyzed as the names that things correspond to are found in Norn's well, and she feeds Yggdrasil with these words. Ultimately, Norn tells poets that the prize is too profound to correspond to a name. The reward he carried to his country was suddenly lost, and the promise was broken; the thing became no “thing.” We can analyze the poem in two ways: Either the poet has carried the other, the different, that which does not belong to his own culture and language, into his country and has not been

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of Norn appears as the three witches of Shakespeare and the three fates in the Greek goddesses. But it is possible that Stefan Georg used symbols from Nordic mythology for political reasons.



able to find a literal equivalent because the meaning of things is lost in the transfer to another language, or the prize is open to so many possibilities of interpretation with its depth that it cannot be given a definite name. Both might be true. Nothing can be interpreted or understood without the power of the word, and every interpretation includes something potentially unspoken in itself.

To analyze this further, I would like to apply Joseph Campbell's conception of a hero's journey. For him, the hero's journey is divided into three main parts: "departure, initiation, and return" (Gerringer, 2024). The heroes leave "the ordinary world" and travel towards the unknown. They face various tests and difficulties in the descent and initiation sections and finally win a reward. On the way back, they face their most significant test and either die and are reborn or come close to death. This rebirth causes the hero to learn a moral lesson, realize things he had not seen before, and recognize himself. The hero is transformed and returns to his homeland with an elixir (Gerringer, 2024).

Parallel to this, Georg's poet also tells the same story with a sharp twist: the hero's quest becomes unsuccessful because the subject cannot hold the word captive.

There are several points to be cautious about when conducting this analysis. Gadamer avoids recognizing the experience of art as an adventure or a journey. Because a journey always implies an interruption from everyday experience. Crossing over from everyday life into a magical alien world undermines the continuity of the experience of art. For Gadamer, the experience of art must be grounded in life. For this reason, he favored the concept of play instead of adventure. At the same time, language in itself is not an ontological condition for Dasein's essential existence but an ontological condition for Dasein's experience of the world in Gadamerian philosophy. However, this poem still emphasizes many things Gadamer wishes to focus on. The poem also carries a hermeneutic meaning in that the poet's experience occurs beyond the subject's control, that interpretation is exhaustible, that the unspoken is hidden in the spoken, and that we need language to be understood long before interpretation. This means the desire for "the elixir of the word" is, in fact, a hermeneutic event that points to an excess of meaning.

To understand this connection, besides the first chapter of *Truth and Method*, let us look at his article “Aesthetics and Hermeneutics,” a lecture published in December 1964 and translated into English for the first time in 1976. Gadamer states his views on the relationship between aesthetics and understanding. Whereas classical hermeneutics is restricted to understanding and interpreting historical, religious, legal, and literary texts, Gadamer argues that hermeneutics encompasses all our experiences of understanding and interpreting the world. For Gadamer, the experience of art, which is the most immediate of all experiences of interpretation and self-understanding, is involved in hermeneutics. If classical hermeneutics were thought of as bridging minds, art would be outside this field. For him, “the hermeneutical perspective is so comprehensive, however, that it must even include the experience of beauty in nature and art” (Gadamer, 2007, p. 124). Gadamer says there is a closeness between us as if there is no gap between us and the work of art. Thus, every encounter we have with it is also an encounter with the self. Gadamer states that the inclusion of art in the question of meaning and truth is only possible by transferring “the systematic problem of aesthetics into the question of the experience of art” (Gadamer, 2007, p. 126).

Let’s now turn from this point to the relationship with aesthetics. As mentioned earlier, Gadamer asserts that language is the medium through which meaningful interactions occur, and the interpretation of nature, art, or words operates within a specific interpretative horizon. And, among all other experiences, art occupies a unique place. Gadamer asserts that “[f]or of all the things that confront us in nature and history, the work of art speaks to us most directly” (Gadamer, 2007, p. 124).

Gadamer regards the problem of searching for the justification of art not as a problem of modernity. For him, this problem dates back to Socrates. Socratic thought challenges the traditional poetic expression of truth (Gadamer, 1986, p. 3). In *the Republic*, Plato questioned the relevance of truth to poetic discourse and shifted his focus to rationality, even though he said that Homer's writings were a significant part of truth and education in his time. Beauty is also a concept that has been relevant since the beginning of the history of philosophy. However, the appearance of beauty as an academic subject and its introduction into the field so that a 'science' can be

produced do not go back far than the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Aesthetics, as a branch of philosophy, investigates why we find something beautiful, not others, and is considered different from the philosophy of art, which is regarded as a sub-branch of aesthetics. Gadamer claims that the hermeneutical perspective encompasses interpretive encounters with artworks and nature. Gadamer states that art has sustained its existence in social and religious life from the earliest times and should not be perceived as something performed or encountered in a “magical realm” of aesthetics. This is why Gadamer objects to the concept of aesthetic differentiation resulting from aesthetic consciousness, which indicates a detachment of art from reality. As we can see from this, Gadamer is highly critical of the conventional notion of aesthetics.

Gadamer claims that a work of art is successful to the extent that it tells us something. To say that it has language also means restoring a cognitive ground to the work of art, which, with Kant, has evolved into an object of pleasure. Gadamer states that a work of art has a language similar to the language of a text, yet without the application of words. This language, known as the language of art, is the medium through which art communicates (Gadamer, 2007, p. 124). The work of art, for Gadamer, should astonish and alter human beings with its enduring presence across the centuries. Art is precisely a transformative event produced and confronted by human beings in their experience of the world.

Hermeneutics also includes non-linguistic works of art since the language spoken by the work is not the same as that of the artist. All successful works of art, regardless of genre, contribute to understanding oneself (Gadamer, 2007, p. 128). According to Gadamer, when a work of art speaks, it not only reconstructs its original historical horizon but also contains the possibilities of what it can tell us in itself. Following Heidegger, Gadamer also states that every encounter with a work of art signifies “a disclosure of something previously concealed” (Gadamer, 2007, p. 129). To assert that an artwork contains something unspoken also implies that it also includes something alien to us. Therefore, hermeneutics comes into play to render this estrangement intelligible to us. According to him, art, with its divine and collective ties with the past, speaks precisely the truths about being human. Every experience of

art enables a hidden truth to be brought forth and unveiled by its spectator. Therefore, a work of art that involves truths about human experience should not be regarded as an abstraction, detached from reality.

Gadamer asserts that the work of art has a critical meaning-bearing task in the social context. When a work of art originates from an alien world and enters another historical horizon of meaning, it exists not only for the aesthetic pleasure of the spectator. At the same time, it tells us something about its historical world. Yet, the work of art retains its permanence not only by talking about its original state. Among all possible meanings, the artwork tells us something about us in the present. The “permanence” in the work of art necessitates conformity to the taste of the period and the generation of its recipients. Gadamer asserts that this permanence emerges as “repeatability” for performative arts (Gadamer, 2007, p. 127). Even an ancient tragedy is played millions of times; some of them manage to survive up to this day, like Oedipus. Gadamer states that to expect that the historical horizon of the artist has to be reconstructed to understand a work of art is “indismissible abstraction” (Gadamer, 2007, p. 129). Thus, Gadamer asserts that for an appropriate interpretation of an artwork, the conditions of the period that the spectator receives are decisive even though the work of art carries part of its original historical horizon to the present. That is to say, what makes a work of art successful is that it continues to have something to say to its recipient, even in a realm to which it does not belong.

Artworks display a contemporaneity that allows them to communicate to us with a unique immediacy that historical texts cannot. Considering that Gadamer opposes the subject-object distinction of traditional aesthetics, he refers to the language of the work of art itself when he mentions that the work of art speaks. Independent of the language spoken by its artist, the artwork retains its permanence and acquires contemporaneity by speaking in its own language. The aim of hermeneutics is to interpret the meaning of the work of art to make it comprehensible to us in performative arts. For him, a successful artwork overrules the performer and “stands” on its own (Gadamer, 2007, p. 127). Gadamer claims that even though the work of art always presents itself in the present, it has never been fully comprehended. Yet,

the openness and excess of interpretation carried by the work of art still require “application of appropriateness” (Gadamer, 2007, p. 195).

Artists are supposed to display their unique artistic creativity in their artworks and establish a meaningful dialogue with their spectators through their artworks. The encounter with a work of art has a transformative effect on both the artist and the viewer. The continuous conveyance of this transformative effect on the spectator through the experience of art ensures that the validity of art continues to be sustained. Just as religious texts contain an understanding of ourselves, the work of art also involves an encounter with an aspect of the self, so hermeneutics consists of our self-understanding and experience of the world. Both the work of art and the experience of nature develop in the interpretative horizon of the historical person with a sense of meaning. Thus, Gadamer states that truth belongs not only to the domain of philosophy and science. Through engagement with a successful work of art, the individual discovers a new truth about oneself, the world of the work of art, and the other. Therefore, Gadamer maintains that if the spectator is open to dialogue and the artwork is successful, the event of art has a transformative effect.

Gadamer asserts that what art tells us corresponds to a valid meaning within our horizon of meaning; it should not be regarded as just a metaphor. The experience of art is within the field of hermeneutics, as it has a close affinity with meaning and understanding. Gadamer claims that the connection between art and truth was preserved until the end of idealism. However, the post-Hegelian and neo-Kantian periods did not do a good enough task regarding truth (Gadamer, 2007, p. 8). This is because the loss of significance of art with its subjectivization was not crucial for these philosophical approaches. Yet, Gadamer's philosophy still retains the relationship between beauty, art, and the truth.

After *Truth and Method*, Gadamer's emphasis shifts to the play character of art, supporting that the truth claim of the work of art is not a “representation” but a “presentation” (George, 2011, p. 107). This means that the task of the experience of art is not to reconstruct the horizon of meaning and history in which the work of art was initially situated. Instead, this implies that the virtue of art enables the human

beings who find themselves in the play to gain an understanding of themselves in their encounter with the work of art that continually carries their own existence into the present. In fact, by addressing the relevance of beauty at a period in which art has already outgrown the concept of beauty, Gadamer also makes positive remarks about aesthetics, even though his concern is exclusively to discuss the experience of art. Therefore, claiming that he displays an ultimately destructive attitude toward aesthetics would not be correct.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This thesis addressed Gadamer's criticism of the abstract characteristics of traditional aesthetics and its consequences: aesthetic consciousness and aesthetic differentiation. The final chapters explored the significance of aesthetics and the experience of art within Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer's critique of traditional aesthetics serves as a crossroad for comprehending his seminal work, *Truth and Method*, as well as his later writings about the ontology of artworks and his individual interpretations of specific artworks or genres of art. As previously remarked, Gadamer claims not to be a systematic philosopher. Therefore, this thesis covers various works by Gadamer in which he discusses aesthetics and the experience of art.

Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics primarily concerns understanding, education, interpretation, self-formation, dialogue, and art. His views on art and aesthetics do not occupy the foremost position in *Truth and Method*. Thus, in fact, the chapter on transcending the aesthetic dimension in *Truth and Method* is concerned with recovering the truth claim of human sciences and art. In particular, in the chapter on the long history of human sciences' relationship with aesthetics and morality, he benefits from concepts such as *Bildung*, *Sensus Communis*, taste, and judgment. According to Gadamer, these concepts are integral parts of different kinds of truths that scientific methods cannot encompass.

One of the most essential aims of Gadamer in *Truth and Method* is to liberate understanding and truth from modernity's obsession with scientific methodology. Since *Truth and Method* mainly concerns the critique of method and the restoration of different forms of truth that cannot be covered by methodology, the origins of the truth conveyed by the work of art remain partially vague while remaining in the first

chapter of Truth and Method. Having realized this problem, Gadamer elaborated on the interplay of aesthetics with hermeneutics and on why the philosophy of art has more to contribute to hermeneutics than aesthetics in his later writings. Hans-Georg Gadamer explores traditional aesthetics and its relation to the practical realm, philosophy and human sciences. Before Kant, the task of art was associated with practical and religious life. Gadamer addresses the problem of aesthetics and the experience of art in Truth and Method for the recovery of truths that must not be constrained by methodology.

Gadamer believes that the experience of art and the human sciences possess a knowing that cannot be exhausted by any methodological constraints. For this reason, he attempts a two-stage recovery: firstly, to solve the problem of the method by re-enacting the traditions, and secondly, to liberate the experience of art, which is the primary model for all types of truths related to understanding, from traditional aesthetics. According to Gadamer, the truth revealed by the human sciences and art is associated with the immediate human experience of the world. Gadamer asserts that, unlike natural sciences, human sciences strive to capture concrete historical phenomena as dynamic instances of universal and unique events rooted in specific historical contexts. The aim of human sciences is not to draw generalizations but to understand the historical context and its people. Human sciences, employing the concept of spirit, Geist in its historical origin, have a potential that cannot be covered by the certain and precise laws of the natural sciences, which are focused on scientific progress.

First, Gadamer explores human sciences' scientific claims within traditions such as ancient rhetoric, practical philosophy, and traditional hermeneutics. He employs some concepts from these traditions to support his arguments. Gadamer characterizes *Bildung* as an enduring process of inner formation and cultivation, lacking any external goals, and thus emphasizes its historical significance for human sciences. The concept of *Bildung* refers to the most humane way of cultivating one's social and innate capabilities.

His idea of *Bildung* is closely related to Hegelian understanding of the concept. Hegel's *Bildung* also demonstrates the significance of transcending human beings'



initial condition in nature by abandoning their individuality; the philosopher puts forth a comprehensive view that includes both theoretical and practical fields. He explains how labor contributes to the self-formation of individual and communal improvement. Thus, *Bildung* stresses the need for balance between the fulfillment of one's universal tasks and personal development. Another point Gadamer points out about the tradition is the importance of coherence and probability in the rhetorical tradition's truth. In practical philosophy, Gadamer stresses that understanding is not merely a technique but something directly affecting us. Furthermore, Gadamer explores how judgments relate to legal and theological hermeneutics, which involve applying specific rules to situations rather than solely depending on theoretical wisdom that includes abstract principles. He also applies the concept of *Sensus Communis* to show the communal aspect of *Bildung*. According to Gadamer, Helmholtz associated human sciences with the concepts of tact and feeling. Tact is crucial for understanding the social dimensions inherent within the scientific community. Nevertheless, according to Gadamer, tact should not be considered to be only a psychological phenomenon; its cultural and traditional aspects should not be overlooked. Helmholtz's emphasis on the role of artistic sensitivity and memory in human sciences also plays a crucial function for Gadamer. He also claims that an educated person should be able to put a distance from all acquired knowledge to reach an understanding of what is alien, which is one of the fundamental tasks of human sciences and hermeneutics.

On the way to philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer finds the beginning of the subordination of truth to the epistemological realm and the reduction of historical and cultural concepts to aesthetics in Kantian philosophy. Before the aesthetics of the 19th century, to which Kant paved the way, the association of human beings with beauty in nature and art had been conceived in relation to morality and religion. Gadamer argues that the Kantian view of aesthetics leads his Romantic followers to pure subjectivism and neglects the significance of tradition and society in aesthetic experience.

Kant defines judgment of taste as “free play of faculties of imagination and understanding.” In this play, the two faculties interact in a way that conforms to

conceptual knowledge. Gadamer asserts that Kant's view stays on pure ground as taste involves no content, and its communicability depends on the subjects' minds. Gadamer argues that good taste still retains the characteristic of distinguishing the cultivated society from the rest. However, according to Gadamer, Kant's assessment of the communal connections of judgment solely in terms of the judgment of taste and his grounding of taste on an a priori ground constitutes a "crossroad" for the self-understanding of human sciences and art. Gadamer argues that Kant's association of *Sensus Communis* exclusively with the notion of taste results in taste being carried out of the realm of morality together with *Sensus Communis*. When taste, *Sensus Communis*, and judgment were confined to the aesthetic domain, the human sciences and the arts, in which the aesthetic element was actively involved, found no place to substantiate their truth claims.

According to Kant, the fundamental distinction between art and nature is artificially created. Therefore, there is no requirement for a separate analysis of taste for art. Gadamer mainly criticizes Kant's successors' attempts to develop a philosophy of art solely based on the concept of genius. Another reason for Kant's concept of genius to gain such a groundbreaking status is that while taste was concerned with both artistic and natural beauty, the concept of genius concerns exclusively artistic beauty and the inimitable nature of the works of the genius. This paves the way for further subjectivization of aesthetics by Kant's successors.

Gadamer maintains that the Romantic movement, pioneered by Kant, played a significant role in radicalizing Kantian subjectivism. He severely criticizes the movement due to the Romantics' effort to make aesthetics dependent on the artist's subjective experience and the beholder's disinterested pleasure. However, post-Kantian aesthetics neglected the traditional notion of natural beauty and emphasized the transformative role of individual expression and aesthetic ideas of genius. The artists of the 19th century promoted the concept of *Erlebnis* in an attempt to convey a sense of the unique significance of their experiences in the mass society that emerged as a result of the accelerating scientific advances. *Erlebnis* stands for the way in which the lived experiences of individuals remain intact in "the totality of life" and how the remnants of these lived experiences intertwine with the artistic creation as

opposed to the uniformity of human beings in the society. Gadamer opposes this understanding because the experiences of *Erlebnis* neglect the particularity of any experience. Instead, he prefers to employ *Erfahrung*, denoting singular enduring experience.

Gadamer's aesthetics challenge the traditional aesthetics' abstract conception of art as an activity disconnected from everyday life practices. He argues that the only way for human sciences to regain their claim to truth is to overcome traditional aesthetics, which has been excluded from morality and knowledge. Gadamer claims that aesthetic consciousness, which emerged from traditional aesthetics, sees aesthetic objects as mere appearances in opposition to reality. He also introduces the term "aesthetic differentiation" to describe the abstraction process of aesthetic consciousness, which divorces art from its original religious or secular functions.

Gadamer intends to reestablish the relationship between art, morality, and society by transferring the questions of pure aesthetic experience into the experience of art in his philosophical journey. He employs the concept of play, which was also used by traditional aesthetics, to show the ontological status of art. Gadamer puts the modern anthropological concept of play against the concept of play in the artistic creation of aesthetic consciousness. In this context, he mainly refers to Huizinga's concept of play. For Gadamer, the concept of play has a function that emerges not only metaphorically in the human experience of the world. Therefore, considering artistic creative play as a 'magical realm' independent of history and culture undermines its ties with the mode of being human. By considering the element of play as a natural process, human participation in play is no longer merely a form of flight from the obligations of everyday life. Following Huizinga's understanding, Gadamer discusses the intrinsic movement of the play regardless of the player. He cites the "play of light" and the "play of waves" as illustrations of these movements, which do not aim to reach a destination. The back-and-forth movement expresses only the continuity of movement without denoting an endpoint. Gadamer counts this point as an effective starting point for elucidating the purposeless openness in the experience of art. The spectator and the performer participate in the movement of the play. Through the openness offered by the play, there is no longer a sense of distance between the

performers and the spectators of the play. Gadamer shifts his focus to the concept of the festival because the play opens a path to participation by itself. As temporal events, festivals occur by simultaneous celebrations in a certain period. For Gadamer, these events are ideal for explaining the communal aspect of art. People come together at the festival to be relieved of the common struggles of life, even if only for a short time. Artworks, as playful events, invite people to their dialogue. The participants attend the “symbolic character” of a work of art, and, in this encounter, a new meaning that artwork conveys is unveiled.

Gadamer discusses the relationship between aesthetics and understanding, arguing that hermeneutics encompasses all our experiences of understanding and interpreting the world. He believes that art is included in hermeneutics as the most direct experience of interpretation and self-understanding. He argues that there is an intimacy between us and the work of art and that every encounter with it is also an encounter with an aspect of ourselves. Gadamer believes that language is the medium through which meaningful interactions occur and that the interpretation of nature and art operates within a particular horizon of understanding. Art has a peculiar position among all other experiences since it speaks to us most directly. He is highly critical of traditional aesthetics and believes a work of art succeeds if it tells us something. Gadamer states that when a work of art speaks to us, it not only reconstructs its original historical horizon but also contains the possibilities of what it might tell us. For him, all successful works of art, regardless of their genre, contribute to one's self-understanding. Gadamer also states that every encounter with a work of art means “the disclosure of something previously hidden.” Therefore, hermeneutics comes into play to make the meanings revealed by these hidden elements intelligible to us. Ultimately, Gadamer's view of the relationship between aesthetics and understanding is complex.

Gadamer argues that art exists not only for the aesthetic pleasure of the spectator but also to tell us something about its historical horizon and has the task of transmitting meaning in a social context. According to Gadamer, however, the permanence of art is not only in speaking of its original state but also in expressing something about us in the present. As an example of permanence, Gadamer refers to the concept of

reproducibility for the performative arts since even ancient tragedies such as Oedipus have survived to the present day.

For Gadamer, the work of art exhibits a contemporaneity that enables them to communicate with us in a unique immediacy that historical texts cannot do. A successful work of art overrules the performer and ‘stands’ on its own. Gadamer claims that although the work of art always offers itself in the present tense, it is never fully encompassed. The encounter with a work of art has a transformative effect on both the artist and the spectator, ensuring the ongoing relevance of art. Gadamer suggests that what art tells us corresponds to a valid meaning within our horizon of meaning and that the experience of art falls within the scope of hermeneutics because it is closely related to meaning and understanding.

Gadamer claims that understanding is not an activity of the subject but is related to how Dasein dwells in language and understands beings. When we perceive something, our recognition of a thing as “that specific thing” is a hermeneutic event and necessarily involves interpretation and understanding. For Gadamer, there is no pure perception of an object; instead, there is an understanding of it. Therefore, hermeneutics is active in the whole human experience of the world, and the universality of hermeneutics ensures the ontological status of human beings as a result of their activity of understanding and interpreting things in the language medium. Dwelling in language, human beings relate to everything around themselves and understand themselves and their experience in the world. Understandably, Gadamer strongly opposes the technical understanding of language. For him, just as the acquisition of a language by a foreigner for the first time or the first introduction of a baby to a language involves learning the words and signs of that language one by one, understanding a language process requires unity.

Just like other languages, Gadamer asserts that the language of art also requires a similar experience of uniformity and permanence. For him, the fact that contemporary art seems detached from the past is only the result of certain historical misinterpretations. The encounter with the work of art is a transformative event that occurs as if there is no distance between the artwork and human beings. Gadamer

emphasizes the astonishing aspect of art's temporal and participatory structure, which constantly presents itself in the present, and explains that we witness the dance of human “rationality” and “conscience” in the encounter of the work of art.

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## APPENDICES

### A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Hans-Georg Gadamer, estetik, hermenötik, *Hakikat ve Yöntem* sorunlarına ilişkin önemli katkılarda bulunmuş bir 20. yüzyıl filozofudur. Kendisini iyi bir yazar ve filozof olarak tanımlamaktan ziyade, iyi bir konuşmacı ve öğretmen olarak tanımlayan düşünürün felsefesinde eğitim, diyalog, sanat ve tarih kavramları merkezi bir öneme sahiptir. Kendisinden önce gelen hermenötik geleneğinin aksine onun düşünce sistemi felsefi hermenötik olarak adlandırılır. Birçok konferans makalesinin toplandığı eserlerin bulunmasına karşın *Hakikat ve Yöntem* (1960) onun en büyük eseridir. Bu eser üç ana problemi içerir: Estetik ve sanat, tarih ve anlama, dil ve hermenötiğin evrenselliği. Geleneksel hermenötiğin aksine, Gadamer'in felsefi hermenötiği sadece metinleri yorumlamak ve anlaşmazlıkları çözmekle ilgilenmekle kalmaz. Ayrıca Gadamer tüm insan deneyimlerinin hermenötiğe dahil olduğunu, çünkü bütün bunların deneyimlerin hepsinin dil tarafından dolayımlandığını söyler. Dolayısıyla sanat ve estetik deneyimini, önemli birer insan deneyimleri olarak, hermenötiğe dâhildir.

Gadamer, *Hakikat ve Yöntem* adlı eserine estetik ile başlar. Güzele dair sorular yalnızca moderniteye ait sorular değildir. Aksine, insan deneyimine dair düşünce hareketlerinin başladığı ilk zamanlardan bu yana güzelin meşruiyeti her zaman üzerine düşünülegelen bir konu olmuştur. Gadamer sanatı ve estetiği geçmişten bu yana sahip oldukları gündelik, seküler, dini ve toplumsal ilişkilerinden soyutlayan günümüz sanat anlayışının kökenini estetik alanının inşasına ve yol açtığı sorunlara bağlar. Estetik nesnelere salt haz nesnelere olarak görülmesine karşı çıkmak adına geleneksel estetiğin sorunlarına yoğunlaşmıştır. Başta *Hakikat ve Yöntem* adlı eseri olmak üzere, *Güzelin Güncelliği* ve "Estetik ve Anlama" adlı eserlerinde sanat, estetik hermenötik, felsefe, tarih ve dil arasındaki ilişkileri Gadamer'in perspektifinden görmek mümkündür. Yine de bu analizin bir sanat teorisi elde etmek, yeniden bir salt estetik alan yaratmak ile ilişkisi yoktur. Niyet, ontolojiktir. Gadamer

hermenötiğin evrenselliğine giden yolda ilk aşamayı geleneksel estetik eleştirisine ayırmıştır (Gadamer, 2004, s. 132).

Gadamer'e göre, bütün dünya deneyimleri içinde insanların karşılaştığı tüm hakikat biçimleri arasında, sanat hakikati bize en dolaysız konuşandır. *Hakikat ve Yöntem* adlı kitabında Gadamer, sanat ve estetik sorununu, insan bilimlerinin yöntem sorunundan önce irdelemiştir. Ona göre, sanat deneyimi insan olmaya dair temel sorular ile karşılaşmamızı sağlayan yegâne şeydir. Bunun aksine her türlü yöntem gerektiren bilim yapma biçimi belirli bir yanlışlanma ve tereddüt içerir (Gadamer, 2007, s. 115). Sanat deneyiminde, eserin bize hitap etmesi için kendi varlığından başka bir dayanak veya nedene ihtiyaç yoktur.

Estetik kavramının etimolojik kökeni yunanca *aisthesis*, yani duyum kavramına dayanmaktadır (Keane ve Lawn, 2011, s. 8). Dolayısıyla kelime ilk olarak ortaya çıktığında doğrudan sanat deneyimi ve bugünkü otonom alanı ile doğrudan ilişkili olarak bilinmemektedir. 18. yüzyılın önemli bilimsel değişikliklere tanıklık edilen bir dönem olması, dönemin düşünürlerinin bilimsellik ve akla verdiği önem nedeniyle estetiğin de kendine bir meşruiyet alanı geliştirmesi gerekmiştir. Alexander Baumgarten bu gereksinime yanıt olarak, 18. yüzyılda, estetiğin de kendine ait yasalara sahip olan bir "bilim" olarak nitelendirilmesi için adımlar atmıştır. Baumgarten, estetiği temellendirmek için onda bilişsel bir yön bulmaya çalışmıştır. Baumgarten'dan farklı olarak Kant, bilişsel olmayan bir estetik anlayışı önermiştir. O, estetiği, salt öznel ve evrensel a priori ilkeler üzerine temellendirir. Gadamer'e göre, bu, estetik nesnelerin daha sonra hakikatten yoksun, salt haz kaynaklarına indirgenmesine zemin hazırlamış bir başlangıç adımıdır.

*Hakikat ve Yöntem* 'in ilk bölümü estetik ve insan bilimlerinin yöntem arayışı sorunu ile ilişkilidir. İnsan bilimleri ilk ortaya çıktıklarından beri kendilerine bütünleşik bir yöntem bulamamışlardır. Gadamer, bu problemin insan bilimlerinin bilimsel yöntemle değil, anlama ve yorumlama ile ilgili olmasından kaynaklandığını iddia eder. Gadamer geçmişte bazı estetik kavramların ahlaki ve dini niteliklere sahip olduğunu söyler. Dolayısıyla Gadamer insan bilimlerinin ve sanatın hakikat iddialarını kaybetmelerini, Kant ve sonrasında gelen Romantik filozof ve tarihçiler

tarafından ortaya atılan otonom ve öznel evrensel estetik alanına bağlar. Ona göre estetik, gerçeklikten uzak bir sanat yaratımı alanına, müzelere ve konser salonlarına hapsedilmemelidir. Sanat deneyimi, deneyim öznesi insana dayanmaktan çok; sanat eserinin ve izleyicisinin dönüştürücü karşılaşımına dayanmaktadır. Burada sanat eseri ve seyircisi arasındaki özne-nesne ilişkisi yıkıma uğrayarak bütüncül bir olay oluşturur. Her sanat deneyimi esnasında, daha önce sanat eseri anlam ufkunda saklı kalmış bir hakikat açığa çıkarak, izleyicilerin kendilerini ve dünyalarını anlamalarına yardımcı olur.

Gadamer estetiğin hala toplum, ahlak ve hakikatle ilişki içerisinde olmasına dikkat çekmek amacıyla, bazı estetik ile ilişkili kavramların Kant öncesi hümanist bağlamlarını incelememiz gerektiğini söyler. Bunu yapmasındaki amaç, estetiğin salt haz sağlanacak güzel nesnelere ile ilgilenmediğini göstermektir. Burada sözü edilen “hakikat”, epistemolojinin kapsamını aşar çünkü Gadamer’e göre her deneyimde açığa çıkan anlam ve hakikat, henüz açığa çıkmamış bir hakikatin potansiyelini de beraberinde getirir. Gadamer, modernitenin sanatı bilgi alanının dışında bırakan eğiliminin farkındadır ve “sanat biliminin” bile sanat deneyiminin taşıdığı hakikati kavrayamayacağını düşünür (Gadamer, 2004, s.xxi).

Gadamer yargı, beğeni, *Bildung* ve *sensus communis* kavramlarını hümanist bir bağlamda kullanır. Gadamer’e göre estetikle ilgili bu kavramlar bilişsel değeri olan, hakikat taşıyıcısı ve insan bilimleri için önemli olan kavramlardır. Gadamer’e göre *Bildung* kavramı, kültür yoluyla yeni beceriler kazanma ile kendini anlama ve karakter gelişimi için dönüştürücü bir içe bakışın birleşimi olan ve hiç bitmeyen bir süreçtir. *Bildung* sürecindeki kişi, yalnızca bireysel yetiler geliştirmekte kalmaz aynı zamanda iyi bir yargıya ve karaktere sahip olmak için de çaba sarf etmelidir. Dolayısıyla *Bildung* kavramı, kişinin hem sosyal hem de doğuştan gelen yeteneklerini insani olarak geliştirmesini ifade eder. *Bildung*’un toplumsal bileşenini ifade eden kavram, *sensus communis* kavramına karşılık gelir. *Sensus communis* ya da “sağduyu” insan deneyiminin ortaklıklarına atıfta bulunur ve bireylerin ortak iyiye ulaşmak için kendi bakış açılarının ötesinde karar vermelerini sağlar. Gadamer, *sensus communis* ve *Bildung*’un, hakikati bilim adamının kişisel formasyonuna ve doğru yorumuna bağlı olan insan bilimlerinin kendini anlama yöntemlerinden daha

etkili olduğunu savunur. Kant, *Bildung*'u “doğal kapasitelerin geliştirilmesi” olarak görürken, Gadamer hem evrensel hem de bireysel formasyondan söz eder.

Gadamer, beğenin tarihsel olarak, sanat ya da güzellik için bireysel tercihler ile ilişkili bir anlama sahip olan çağdaş anlayışından daha derin özelliklere sahip olduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Ona göre, beğeni başlangıçta estetik bir kavramdan ziyade ahlaki bir kavramdır (Gadamer, 2004, s. 31). Gadamer, hümanist geleneğin beğeni yargısının geçerliliğini, kültürlü bireylerden oluşan toplumlarının üyeleri tarafından kabul görmeye dayandırdığını ileri sürer. Buna karşın Kant, beğeni yargısının geçerliliğinin a priori ilkelere bağlı olduğuna inanır. Bu girişim, estetik beğenin toplum ve ahlakla geçmişten gelen sıkı bağından ayrılmasıyla sonuçlanır. Gadamer, Kant'ta beğenin öznel arası yapısının, yani güzelin ortak bir zeminde üzerine iletişim kurulabilir olmasının tamamen biçimsel olduğunu ileri sürer. Gadamer'e göre bu sınırlı beğeni kavramı, sanatın ahlaki ve bilişsel alandan soyutlanmasında önemli bir rol oynar.

Gadamer, modern bilimin metodoloji ile sınırlandırılmış bilgi ve hakikat yaklaşımını aşmaya çalışmaktadır. Kitabın adından da anlaşılacağı üzere Gadamer, hakikat kavramının metodolojik alana indirgenmesi sorununun kökenini, estetiğin sosyal ve ahlaki yönlerinden ayrılmasına dayandırır. Gadamer'e göre, hakikat ve bilgi alanı içinde değerlendirilen estetiğin ve sanat deneyiminin değersizleştirilmesi, başta tarih olmak üzere tüm insan bilimlerinin kaderini şekillendirmiştir. Sanat deneyimi ve insan bilimleri, herhangi bir metodolojik kısıtlama tarafından tüketilemeyecek bir bilgi türüne sahiptir. Bu nedenle Gadamer, hem sanatı hem de insan bilimlerini kurtarmak için öncelikle estetik alanın aşılması gerektiğini belirtir.

Gadamer, sanat, estetik ve hakikat arasındaki ilişkiyi ancak geleneksel estetiğin biçimsel, cansız ilkelerinin “ötesine geçerek” koruyabileceğimizi varsayar. Estetik alanın aşılmasıyla, sanat deneyiminin otantikliği ve hakikat değeri yeniden tesis edilir. Bu şekilde insan bilimleri de kendini anlama kavramını yeniden kazanır. Dolayısıyla, bilimsel yöntemi kısıtlamadan bilim olarak meşruiyetlerini korurlar. Gadamer, Kant'ın *Yargı Eleştirisi*'nde 19. yüzyıl estetiğinin tüm avantaj ve dezavantajlarının temelini bulur ve yargı, beğeni, deha, bağımlı ve bağımsız güzellik



ve gzellik ideali gibi birok kritik kavramı eleřtirel bir řekilde inceler. Gadamer geleneksel eleřtirisine “estetiđin znelleřtirilmesi” ile bařlar. Onun iin en byk problemlerden bir tanesi, Kant estetiđi “znel evrensellik” zerine temellendirmesidir. Ona gre, bu grř daha sonra sanat ve insan bilimlerinin hakikatin tařıyıcıları olmaktan ziyade znel ilgi alanları olarak grlmesine yol amıřtır.

Kant’ın genel felsefesi rasyonalizm ve ampirizmin zorluklarını gstermeyi ve zmeyi amaladığı gibi, bu uygulama estetiđe de hizmet eder. Leibniz, Wolff ve Baumgarten gibi isimler gzellik iin rasyonel standartlar koymayı amalarken, Hume, Hutcheson ve Burke gibi isimler ampirik temelde gzelliđin nesnelliđini sađlamaya alıřmıřlardır. Kant ise beđeni yargısını “hayal gc ve anlama yetilerinin zgr oyunu” olarak tanımlar. Bu oyunun sonucunda yeni bir kavramsal bilgi retimi mmkn deđildir. Bundan ziyade, Kant’a gre, bu oyunda iki yeti, kavramsal bilgiye uygun bir řekilde etkileřime girer. Kant ve onu takip eden Romantizm akımı ise yargı ve beđeni kavramları ahlaki ve biliřsel alanlardan uzaklařtırılmıřtır.

Kant’a gre, beđeni kavramı deđiřse de gzel “evrensel olarak iletilebilirdir.” Kant, gzelin iletilebilir karakterinden nesnenin deđil, algılayan znenin sorumlu olduđunu ileri srer. Kant estetiđinde algılayan znedenden bađımsız olarak gzel olarak algılanan nesnenin kendisine dair bir bilgi sahibi olmak mmkn deđildir. Dahası, gzellik deneyiminin kořulları tm insanlarda aynı řekilde mevcuttur. Gadamer’e gre, Kant estetik beđeni ve *sensus communis*’i ahlaktan ayırmıřtır. Kant’ın *sensus communis* kavramı her bir bireydeki zihinsel yetilerimizin ortaklıđından kaynaklanmaktadır. *sensus communis*, herhangi bir dıřsal kavram, olumsal duygu ya da bireysel tercihten bađımsız olarak tm insanları kapsar.

Kant, estetik yargıların “estetik nesnenin” zelliklerine deđil, anlama ve hayal gcnn uyumlu oyunu sonucunda ortaya ıkan hazza dayandıđını ileri srer. Bu nedenle Gadamer, bu grře gre estetik nesne hakkında bilgi sahibi olamaması nedeniyle, znenin estetik yargının tek kaynađı haline geldiđini savunur. Gadamer buradan aıđa ıkan znel “ilgisiz haz” duygusunu eleřtirir. Kant’a gre sanat eseri

hakkında söylenebilecek tek şey, öznedeyandırılmış bir haz duygusu yaratmasıdır. Bu duygunun temelini bilgi değil, nesnenin temsillerinin zihinsel yetelerimize uygunluğu oluşturur. Gadamer'e göre "öznel evrensellik" anlayışı estetiğe bağımsız ve özerk bir alan sunsa da bu durum sanatın ahlak ve hakikat alanlarından sürülmesine neden olur. Gadamer, Kant'ı estetiğin öznel deneyimlere indirgenmesini teşvik etmekle eleştirir. Ona göre, somut ve biricik deneyimler, geleneksel estetiğin biçimsel, öznel ve evrensel deneyimleri arasında ihmal edilmiştir. "Sanatçının öznel yaşamı" ve "izleyicinin ilgisiz hazzı" sanat deneyimindeki tek faktörler haline gelmiştir.

Hermenötüğün inşasına giden yolda Gadamer, Kantçı estetikte hakikatin epistemolojik alana mahkûm kılınmasının ve tarihsel ve kültürel kavramların estetiğe indirgenmesinin başlangıcını bulur. Gadamer'in estetiği, estetik bilincin sanatı yaşamdaki gündelik pratiklerden ayrı bir etkinlik olarak soyut kavrayışına meydan okur. Gadamer, sanatın her zaman sosyal ve dini yaşamın ayrılmaz bir parçası olduğuna ve gerçeklikten ayrı olarak görülmemesi gerektiğine inanır. Estetik alanın bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan estetik bilince göre, bir sanat eserini ahlaki, tarihsel veya bilişsel bağlamından bağımsız olarak değerlendirerek yalnızca estetik bir nesne olarak takdir edilmelidir. Bu perspektiften bakıldığında, bir sanat eserinin doğası hakkında herhangi bir bilgi iddia edilemez; yalnızca onu deneyimleyen bireylerde belirli duyusal ve duygusal tepkiler uyandırdığı bilinebilir. Sonuç olarak, estetik nesnelerin deneyimi öznedir. Bu görüş, sanatın özerkliğinin yolunu açmıştır. Sanat, pratik ve toplumsal işlevlerden bağımsızlığını korur.

Gadamer, estetiği salt biçimsel bir alandan çıkarıp hermenötüğün ufkuna çekmeyi amaçlar. Tıpkı Romalı şair Ovidius'un hikâyesini anlattığı heykeltıraş Pygmalion'un yarattığı heykel Galatea'ya âşık olması ve onunla evlenebilmek için tanrılardan onu ete kemiğe büründürmelerini istemesi gibi, Gadamer'in niyeti de estetiği sanat aracılığıyla ete kemiğe büründürmek gibi görünmektedir. Hikâyedeki kadın bir heykel kadar kusursuz olsa da erkeğin dokunuşunun ötesindedir. Gadamer, gündelik estetik ve çirkin gibi kavramların dışında tutulan bir erişilemez bir mükemmellik alanından ziyade, sanat eseriyle karşılaşmadan doğan deneyimde açığa çıkan hakikat ve anlamların dönüştürücü gücüne odaklanmamızı ister.

Gadamer, hakikatin metodolojik kısıtlamadan kurtulması için insan bilimi de dâhil olmak üzere farklı hakikatlerin varlık tarzına ilişkin sorular sormanın sanat deneyimini gerektirdiğini öne sürer. Bu aşamada Gadamer, sanat eserinin ontolojik yapısının estetik boyutun aşıldığı yer olduğunu ortaya koyar. Nitekim Gadamer, birçok sanat türünün estetiğin saf ve biçimsel alanında sınırlı kalarak anlaşılmasının imkânsız olduğunu düşünür.

Gadamer, geleneksel estetik bilincin sanatın bilişsel yönünü ihmal etmesini büyük bir talihsizlik olarak değerlendirir. Ona göre sanat deneyimi, tüm anlam deneyimi içinde kendini anlamamanın en dolaysız aracıdır. Çünkü bir sanat eseriyle karşılaşma, dünyayı dil aracılığıyla yorumlayan insan için her zaman belirleyici ve dönüştürücü olmaya devam eder. Sanat eserinin taşıdığı anlam ufkun, eserin orijinal tarihsel ufkuyla sınırlı değildir. Eseri, kendisini daima bugüne taşır. Sanat eseri, sanatçının ifade etmeyi amaçladığı şeye indirgenemez. “İfadenin tükenmezliği” sayesinde sanat eseri her zaman yaratıcısının niyetlerini aşar.

Gadamer, estetik bilincin aşılmasını sağlamak için bizi oyun kavramıyla yeniden tanıştırır. Gadamer oyun kavramını esas olarak estetik bilinç kavramının temel temsilcilerinden biri olan Friedrich Schiller’in özgür oyununa karşı önerir. 19. yüzyılın Romantizm akımının bir parçası olarak şair, filozof ve tarihçi olan Schiller, oyun kavramını sanatla ilişkili olarak ele alır. Schiller’in oyunu öznenin oyunudur ve bu oyunda özne teorik ve pratik bilgi ilişkilerinden kurtulmuş özgür bir oyun içindedir. Bu özgür oyun, öznenin kendi zihinsel yetilerindeki uyuma dayanır. Estetik bilinç, oyun kavramının metaforik kullanımının “metodolojik önceliğini” vurgular. Bu anlayış soyut bir arka plan sağlamakla birlikte, oyunun özgün doğasını tam olarak kapsayamaz (Gadamer, 2004, s.103).

Gadamer, oyunu tüm kültürel, dinsel ve gündelik insan pratiklerinde işleyen ayrılmaz bir bileşen olarak görür. Estetik bilincin ürettiği özne-nesne ayrımını oyun kavramıyla aşmaya çalışır. Gadamer, oyunun hem metodolojik hem de modern antropolojik kavranışına atıfta bulunur. Oyun, sembol ve festival kavramlarına atıfla bu deneyimi geliştirerek sanat deneyimimizin antropolojik temellerini ele alır. Huizinga’nın antropolojik oyun anlayışı, Gadamer tarafından ilk ve en kapsamlı

şekilde incelenen kavramdır. Gadamer, estetik bilincin oyunu metaforik olarak kullanmasına karşı Huizinga'nın oyun anlayışının antropolojik perspektifinden metodolojik nedenlerle bahseder. Huizinga'nın bakış açısına göre oyun, bir sona ulaşmayı hedeflemeyen, bunun yerine sürekli tekrarlarla kendini yenileyen amaçsız hareketiyle karakterize edilir. Oyunun kendi ileri geri hareketinde oyuncular artık oynadıklarını hissetmezler. Bu hareketler oyunun kendi özündeki dinamiklerden kaynaklanır. Bu, oyunun doğasının bir öznenin oyunsu davranışında değil, oyunun kendisine içkin olan ve onun varoluş tarzını vurgulayan harekette bulunabileceğini ima eder (Gadamer, 2004, s.104-105).

Gadamer, sanatsal yaratım ve deneyimi oyunsal olaylar olarak tanımladığımızda, sanat anlayışının daha doğru bir kavrayış kazanacağını ileri sürer. Ona göre, öznellik, nesnellik ve varoluşun yapay kısıtlamaları oyun kavramıyla birlikte belirsizleşir. Oyun kavramı sayesinde sanat; sanat eseri, sanatçısı ve izleyicileri arasında sonsuz bir diyalog olarak anlaşılabilir. Gadamer'in oyun kavramı salt bir metafor olmaktan çok uzaktır; oyun, sanat eserinin alımlanmasında ve üretiminde dinamik bir kavramdır. Oyun kavramında sanatçının ve izleyicinin bireysel tercihlerinin ve duygusal durumlarının aşılması, sanat deneyimiyle estetik bilinçten daha yakından ilgili daha kapsamlı bir varoluşsal çerçeve sunar. Oyun kavramında öznel yönlerin yanı sıra "eserin kendi varlık tarzı" da belirgindir (Gadamer, 2004, s.87).

Gadamer, sanat alıcısının sanat eserini pasif bir haz nesnesi olarak deneyimlemediğini belirtir. Sanat alıcısı, oyunun bir katılımcısı olarak sanat eseriyle etkileşime girer. Böyle bir çerçeve, sanattaki geleneksel özne-nesne ikiliğine meydan okur. Oyun kavramı daha geniş bir varoluş anlayışını kapsar ve insan öznelliğinin ötesine uzanır. Oyundaki karmaşık ileri-geri dinamiği, kavramın özünü aydınlatır; bu sayede etkileşimi oyunculardan ziyade oyun belirler.

Gadamer oyun kavramını ele alırken, onun keyfi ve ciddiyetsiz bir kavram olarak görülmesini engelleyecek argümanlar sunar. Gadamer'e göre oyun, oyuncunun ciddiyetle hareket etme niyetini aşan bir ciddiyeti kendi içinde taşır (Gadamer, 2004, s.102). Ciddi bir olay olarak oyun, kendini oyun oynanırken temsil eder. Oyun genellikle insanların hem fiziksel hem de kavramsal olarak sıradan görevlerden ve

zorunluluklarından özgür oldukları ayrı bir alan olarak görülür. Ancak Gadamer'e göre oyunun yarattığı zemin, tam da insan deneyimiyle iç içe geçmiş doğal ve dinamik bir süreçtir. Dolayısıyla oyun, kendi yapısı içinde oyunculara farklı rol ve görevlerin verildiği özgür bir alan sağlar. Gadamer oyunun doğal bir süreç olduğunu ileri sürer. İnsanlar doğanın bir parçasıdır; oyun oynarken doğal bir sürece dahil olurlar. Ona göre oyun, insanın yaptığı bir şey olarak anlaşılmalıdır. O, daha ziyade gerçekten oynandığı zaman gerçekleşir.

Oyunun kuralları, ona katılan bireylerin bilincini ve amaçlarını aşar. Dolayısıyla oyunda ve sanat deneyiminde belirleyici olan hem oyuncular hem de seyirciler için koşulları belirleyen oyundur. Gadamer'in oyun kavramında seyircinin sanatın alıcı topluluğunu ifade ettiği ve sanat eserinin yaratıcılarının da oyunu oynayanlar arasında yer aldığı açıktır. Oyunun varlık tarzının oyuncunun bilincine bağlı olmadığını kabul etmek, Gadamer'e göre, sanat eserinin varlık tarzının da sanatçıya bağlı olmadığını kabul etmek anlamına gelir. Nasıl ki oyuncuların iyi ya da kötü hamleleri sadece oyundaki kaderlerini belirliyorsa, oyunun doğasını ve kurallarını değiştiremiyorsa, sanat eserinde de sanatçının bilinci sanat eserini kuşatamaz. Böylece, Gadamer'e göre, insan oyununun nihai yapısı, sanat deneyimini estetik bilincin sanatsal yaratım süreci, bireysel ifade ve topluluk arasında çizdiği keskin ayırmadan kurtarır. Seyirci aktif bir katılımcı olarak oyunu takip ettiğinde, oyunun ayrılmaz bir parçası haline gelir. Oyunun seyirci üzerinde yarattığı oyun ile bir bütünlük içinde olma hissi göz ardı edilemez.

Gadamer, oyun kavramından sonra, sanat deneyimin toplumsal yönünü betimleyebilmek adına festival kavramına başvurur. Festival kavramı, geçmişten bugüne dini ritüellerde güçlü bağlar içeren bireylerin belirli bir yer ve zamanda bir araya gelmesini sağlayan olaylardır (Gadamer, 1986, s. 40). Festival'in, takvimde kendine özgü bir "zamansallığı" bulunur. Bu toplanmalarda, katılımcılar, gündelik zamanda deneyimledikleri bölünmüş zaman deneyiminden ziyade, festivale ait bütünsel bir zaman deneyimi yaşarlar. Tıpkı bir festivalde olduğu gibi, sanat toplulukları da bir sanat eseriyle karşılaştıklarında dinamik bir katılımcı deneyimi yaşarlar, çünkü sanatın sembolik yönü her zaman yeni yorumlar ve anlamlar için potansiyel taşır.

Gadamer, insanın tüm dünya deneyiminin, anlama ve yorumlamaya olanak tanıyan dilin aracılığı ile ortaya çıktığını iddia eder. Dünya deneyimi içinde, anlamayı içermeyen hiçbir yol yoktur. İnsanlar çevrelerindeki şeyleri dil aracılığıyla anlarlar ve anlama, insanın dünyayla her türlü ilişkisini içerdiğinden, her türlü metodolojik sabitlemeye direnir. Dolayısıyla Gadamer, salt bilimsel bir epistemolojik perspektifin anlamayı asla tam olarak yakalayamayacağını ileri sürer. Anlama, kişinin yaptığı bir şey değildir; aksine, kişinin iradesi dışında gerçekleşir. Bu nedenle Gadamer, daha sonraki çalışmalarında insan bilimlerine değil, epistemolojinin alanı olmayan sanat deneyimine odaklanmıştır.

Klasik hermenötik tarihsel, dini, hukuki ve edebi metinleri anlamak ve yorumlamakla sınırlıyken, Gadamer hermenötiğin dünyayı anlama ve yorumlama deneyimlerimizin tümünü kapsadığını savunur. Gadamer'e göre, tüm yorumlama ve kendini anlama deneyimlerinin en dolaysız olanı olan sanat deneyimi hermenötiğe dahildir. Gadamer, sanat eseri ile aramızda sanki hiçbir boşluk yokmuş gibi bir yakınlık olduğunu söyler. Dolayısıyla onunla her karşılaşmamız aynı zamanda benliğimizin bir yönüyle de bir karşılaşmadır. Gadamer, gerçekliğe karşıt olarak salt bir görünüm olarak estetik nesne fikrine eleştirel yaklaşır. Ona göre, sanat deneyimi daha önce gizli kalan bir hakikatin açığa çıkarılmasını sağlar.

Gadamer'e göre sanat eserleri, tarihsel metinlerin sahip olmadığı benzersiz bir dolaysızlıkla bizimle iletişim kurmalarını sağlayan bir "çağdaşlık" sergiler. Sanat eseri bambaşka bir döneme ait olsa ve o dönemin bir parçasını kendi içinde taşısa bile, izleyicinin algıladığı dönemin koşulları da belirleyicidir. Gadamer için, sanat eserinin toplumsal olarak eleştirel bir anlam taşıma görevine sahiptir. Bir sanat eseri deneyimlendiği dönemden çok daha önceki bir çağdan başka bir tarihsel anlam ufkuna girdiğinde, sadece izleyicinin estetik zevki için var olmaz. Aynı zamanda bize kendi tarihsel dünyası hakkında da bir şeyler söyler. Tüm olası anlamlar arasında, sanat eseri bize bizim hakkımızda bir şeyler söyler. Gadamer, estetik ve hermenötik arasındaki bağın doğal güzellikten değil, ancak sanattan yola çıkılarak keşfedebileceğini öne sürer. Gadamer'e göre sanatın bize söylediği şey, sadece bir metafora değil, anlam ufkumuz içinde geçerli bir anlama karşılık gelir. Sanat

deneyimi, anlam ve anlama ile yakın bir ilişkiye sahip olduđu için hermenötiğin alanına girer. Gadamer, Kant estetiğinin, sanatı kavramsal yükümlülüklerden kurtarma konusundaki önemli başarısını takdir eder. Ancak bireysel etkilerinin yanında, sanatı toplumun belirleyicisi ve dönüştürücüsü olarak gerçekleştirdiği görevlerinden feragat etmeye zorlamak, aynı zamanda sanat eserini özünden mahrum bırakmak ve taşıdığı hakikati görmezden gelmek anlamına gelir.

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**Bölümü / Department** : Felsefe / Philosophy

**TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English):** GADAMER AND AESTHETICS: A COMPREHENSIVE CRITIQUE

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