

GADAMER'S UNDERSTANDING OF ART AS EVENT

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ABSTRACT

GADAMER’S UNDERSTANDING OF ART AS EVENT

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This thesis explicates how understanding art is an “event” according to the hermeneutical phenomenology of Gadamer. After a brief introduction about event ontology, Heidegger’s understanding of *Ereignis* as happening of truth is elaborated due to its influence on Gadamer’s thinking. According to Gadamer, meaning has a movement accounting for the open-ended nature of understanding. Understanding artwork is an event, with its claim of truth that surpasses representational truth, aesthetic consciousness and the intention of its creator. Art has its truth with its element of participation as displayed in the concept of “play”; its unique temporality in line with its dimension of “festival”, and its excess of meaning as reflected by its relevance to the concept of “symbol”. According to Gadamer, art has a contemporaneous dimension that yields its different happening in each time and place, in each encounter in a dialogical mode of understanding. This work displays Gadamer’s understanding of art as event, in line with his thinking that unfolds in the manner of an event, with various cases from art history and examples from different from of art such as music and literature.

Key Words: Gadamer, Understanding, Art, Event, Truth

ÖZ

GADAMER'E GÖRE SANATI OLAY OLARAK ANLAMAK

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Bu tez, Gadamer'in hermeneutik fenomenoloji yaklaşımına göre sanat anlayışının nasıl bir "olay" olduğunu açıklamaktadır. Olay ontolojisi hakkında kısa bir girişten sonra, Gadamer düşüncesi üzerindeki etkisi nedeniyle Heidegger'in hakikatin cereyan etmesi olarak belirttiği *Ereignis* kavramı ele alınmıştır. Gadamer'e göre anlamamanın açık uçlu yapısı ile uyumlu olarak anlam hareket etmektedir. Sanat eserini anlamak; hakikatin bir temsil olarak kabul edilmemesi, eserin estetik bilincin ve yaratıcısının niyetinin ötesinde, kendi hakikat iddiası nedeniyle bir olaydır. Sanat, "oyun" kavramında vurgulanan katılım ögesiyle; "festival" özelliğiyle belirtilen kendine has zamansallığıyla ve "sembol" kavramıyla açığa çıkan anlam fazlalığıyla kendi hakikatini oluşturur. Gadamer'e göre sanatın anlaşılması zaman ve mekâna göre değişen ve her karşılaşmada farklı bir şekilde gerçekleşen diyalojik yapısıyla eş-zamanlılığa sahiptir. Bu çalışma, Gadamer'in sanatı bir olay olarak anlayışını, kendisinin de olay olarak gelişen düşüncesi doğrultusunda, sanat tarihinden çeşitli vakalar ile müzik ve edebiyat gibi farklı sanat türlerinden örneklerle ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gadamer, Anlama, Sanat, Olay, Hakikat

To Yaprak

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

one is never supposed to have the last word¹

Understanding is a subject of understanding; as interpreting is a subject of interpretation, that is not to be understood or interpreted and completed. This means that we try to understand understanding in a manner that is open-ended; whatever we understand about understanding, it would never be complete, it would continue as part of our hermeneutic phenomenological attitude, because Gadamer has made us aware that there is always more to the meaning and no one can say the last word.

According to Gadamer, meaning is an event. It is not a matter of representation or signification. It is not referring to an already established content. In this sense, Gadamer's hermeneutics is different from semantics. Semantics studies what the meaning "is". However, according to Gadamer, meaning is a movement, it is about occurrence. "For an event, to be is to happen... meaning is something effected or accomplished in language, as opposed to an "abstractable sense" (Da Diva and Synch 2024: 6). In order to understand Gadamer, it is important to understand what the event of meaning is in its ontological significance.

It is known that Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy has an intellectual influence in a variety of disciplines, including natural sciences besides social sciences and the humanities. However, art has a special place in his studies and thinking, as he also points out his fundamental orientation as always toward arts. "[T]he subject of art permeates his thinking" (Arthos 2013: viii). It is also crucial to note that Gadamer's thinking on art has an essential role in his overall thinking because he relates his conception of "truth" to art, by showing us the truth of the art in his magnum opus

¹ Gadamer says this at an interview with Jean Grondin in May 1996 (2007: 417).

Truth and Method. It can be argued that in his way of thinking on art, Gadamer does not only think on art but he thinks with art.

Gadamer's style of thinking, speaking, and writing... is sometimes more like a musician improvising on a theme than a philosopher following a line of argument. Gadamer seems to hold a complex understanding about something in his head with all of its many layers and dimensions of meaning, and he often brings this understanding out in an extended rumination where he is comfortable taking leisurely detours and asides that he knows in their unfolding ultimately will give significance to his exposition. It is not always clear even after the fact how Gadamer's themes can be integrated into a conventional argument... When we look for the precise mechanism that Gadamer uses to move from one theme to a seemingly unrelated theme, it is through a kind of modulation, like the common chord that allows a musician to move from one key to another (Arthos 2013: 2).

While this thesis aims to explicate how understanding artwork is an event for Gadamer, it implicitly hints the evental nature of Gadamer's thinking which continues in a dialogical manner. After a brief introduction of event ontology, Chapter Two continues with an in-depth analysis of Heidegger's understanding of event which is at the heart of his later thinking *Ereignis*. *Ereignis* is a unique understanding of event ontology which displays its truth. *Ereignis* has a remarkable influence on Gadamer's understanding of event. Gadamer's understanding of event is explicated mainly from the point of events of meaning and understanding, which are among the crucial elements of his phenomenological hermeneutics.

Chapter Three is devoted to understanding of art. The chapter starts with an in-depth analysis of Heidegger's understanding of art and continues with Gadamer's, because Heidegger has an important influence on Gadamer's understanding of art, while Gadamer builds his unique insight. Gadamer's concepts of "play", "festival" and "symbol" are elaborated mainly from the point of how they are related to the evental property of understanding art.

Chapter Four is devoted to explicating Gadamer's hermeneutic thinking which is mainly dialogical, in his understanding of language as a speculative event. Encounters are important events of art which reflect the open-ended experience of understanding art in the manner of an "I-You", relation due to the claim made by the work. Two cases from art history are examined in this chapter, for their Gadamerian insight about the happening of art encounters, with their aspects of contemporaneity, lingering, aesthetic consciousness and other concepts discussed by Gadamer. These cases are basically

about Van Gogh's encounter with Japanese art and Picasso's encounter with African art and they reflect about how an event happens in a rather static art with its sense of temporality.

In line with Gadamer's unique way of philosophizing, which finds its reflection also in his hermeneutic and dialogical thinking, references are made to the discussions between Daniel Barenboim, the conductor, and Edward Said, the literary critic, that take part in the book *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (2003), because these highly condensed conversations resonate with questions of Gadamer about understanding art, that are elaborated in this work. Barenboim and Said's conversations reveal their life-long questioning and living through the happening of art, most specifically music and literature, with openness to the other and invaluable insight about temporality of the work, art encounter, lingering with work, ideality of the work, interpretation and presentation with an emphasis on their interest in life. I have related their discussions with that of Gadamer's dialogical thinking throughout this work, because their conversations reflect how art and understanding it are events with examples that reflect on the transitional aspect of music.

According to Gadamer, understanding art is an event. Once an artwork is created, it gains its independence from the intention of its creator and it makes its own claim, that is open ended. For instance, a Hittite Sun Disk makes different claims to its viewer in the Third Millennium BC and the Third Millennium AD. There has even been a change in its reception as a symbol for rituals or a work of art. This reflects the contemporaneity of the artwork that is one of the reasons why art happens differently in each of its happenings. Gadamer shows us how meaning of an artwork is not a stable content but a movement laden with open-ended possibilities within the structure of the work, which is its ideality.

An artwork speaks to us and presents itself for our understanding and our understanding continues as we linger with the work. For Gadamer, this is not an aesthetic event, appealing merely to senses. But this is an event of truth with its ontological relevance and life changing potentiality. My encounter with a Hittite Sun Disk would be much different than an Ottoman woman who encountered it two centuries before, because we have different horizons. I cannot argue that I would have

a higher understanding of it because I have more archeological awareness and historic knowledge. It is possible that my already expanded horizon will not understand what she could have understood if she had lingered with the work in a way that she had participated in the meaning of the Disk, which says itself in many ways. She could have a deeper understanding than me, because understanding is about having a communicative event with the work. According to Gadamer the question is not misunderstanding or understanding correctly; but understanding or non-understanding.

Furthermore, my contemporary understanding of a Hittite Sun Disk is not complete. My lingering with the Disk in a dialogical conversation with its saying, can bring me to such a deep understanding that I might take the Disk “like my own” (appropriate or enown it), in my attunement to it. Gadamer claims that understanding art can transform lives. My understanding of the Sun Disk can trigger my making another work of art, that is shocking people with a new claim. People who encounter the work can “recognize” the Disk anew. And, this new understanding would not complete the meaning of a Hittite Sun Disk. The Hittite Sun Disk would continue its event of meaning, as it continues now.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING OF EVENT

2.1 Event Ontology

Philosophy has long been in search of a stable foundation as reflected in its long endeavor for essence, substance, idea, form, first principles or origin. Hegel says “the history of [Western] metaphysics is the tendency towards substance” (Seibt 2022). All-encompassing and essential answers were sought by philosophy for secure grounds for thinking. Thinking gravitated towards the stable in the form of abstractions. This resulted in a metaphysical ontology which is transcendently indifferent to change or actual history. Traditional metaphysics has a tendency to neglect questions of dynamicity or becoming with the intention to rescue itself from change, passage of time and difference. This tendency has been challenged by contemporary philosophy from various aspects and in various ways, which will be elaborated in this section.

Within contemporary philosophy, there is the idea that no ontology can be sufficient without elaborating on change, without explaining its nature and place in reality. Thinking in terms of change, thinking on happening of events or processes has increasingly gained importance in the 20th century and emerged as an alternative to the philosophical search for firm grounds. The ontologically distinctive status of events has been a shared problem by philosophers such as Whitehead, Deleuze, Donald Davidson, Heidegger, Badiou and Gadamer as well as others, with a variety of perspectives.

“Event” is a word of Latin origin, coming from *eventum* and *evenire*, which means “to come out of”. Events have many shapes and forms. In fact, every occurrence is an event. Bahoh clarifies three varieties of events. The first are occurrences within regular

functionings such as raining. The second are “irregular transformative ruptures or shifts inaugurating new horizons of possibility” which produce new forms of thinking, acting, and existing. The third variety of events are the kind of events that are philosophized for their ontological priority to subjects with respect to the eventual nature of being. These are the events that are considered “the most fundamental term of their ontologies.” Such philosophies of events generally share the idea that “a logic of change, difference, or rupture is ontologically prior to—and often generative of—the logic of identity or stability.” (Bahoh 2020: 1-3)

Traditionally, events have most often been assigned a secondary or derivative status with respect to substances or subjects, which are taken to underpin them. An event, for instance, is understood to be an alteration in the attributes of a substance. Linguistically, this framework is replicated in our grammar: a sentence begins with a subject and a predicate, while an event is represented as a change in predicate. (Bahoh 2020: 1)

Deleuze is among the thinkers of event and he says “[a]n event does not just mean that ‘a man has been run over’. The Great Pyramid is an event... Events are produced in a chaos, in a chaotic multiplicity” (Deleuze 1993: 6). Event is a crucial aspect of Deleuze’s thinking, since his philosophy is mainly geared towards becoming and immanence (Beistegui 2004: 221-223). Deleuze has desire “to reverse Platonism”. This is actually related to his desire to substitute events in place of essences, towards a genetic metaphysics rather than a transcendental philosophy with elements similar to Heidegger's. Beistegui, who makes a comparison of the ‘event’ in Deleuze and Heidegger, argues that event indicates *genesis* for Deleuze while it indicates *truth* for Heidegger (Sholtz 2015: 48).

According to Casey, events are inherently precarious and mostly decentered. They generally occur at the edges of existence, and they shake us, as if we are at the edge of a cliff. Shaking is a form of event that is philosophically relevant. Humans shake on the edges; edges of space and time or psychological edges, as if they are looking into an abyss and next to a void, a nothingness. Humans are not only shaken by what is before, but also by what is beyond, such as belief. Not only humans shake; edges themselves are also subject to shaking. Furthermore, besides the edges, Being also shakes. It shakes to its ontological roots. Thinking in terms of “shakiness of Being” is opposed to the ideal of searching unshaking foundations. Being shakes with epochs and works of art. Being shakes at the edge of nothing with existential anxiety (Casey

2014: 13-17), indicating the philosophical and deeply ontological relevance of events for our study. “In every [shaking], we witness, or we experience in first person, an *enantiodromia*, a sudden reversal into the opposite, in Heraclitus’s words” (Casey 2014: 13).

Vattimo, who is a student of Gadamer, also philosophizes on event with a hermeneutic perspective, with a view on its political implications. Vattimo argued that, in its search for the objective truth, philosophy has aimed at overcoming contradictions. Vattimo states that the task of his philosophy is not to look for conciliations to contradictions, as today’s world is not in need of a further conciliation through philosophy. In this sense, he emphasizes that “[h]ermeneutics is basically the philosophy of the irreducible otherness of the other, which does not mean necessarily that it is a philosophy of conflict, but surely it is not a theory of conciliation” (Vattimo 2014: 72). The multiplicity of events and their exponential interpretation account for Vattimo’s historical ontology of genuine freedom which is characterized with never having the last word on the matter, in compliance with the attitude of Gadamer. Vattimo formulates his thinking around the centrality of hermeneutics, in his book *Truth and Interpretation* (Lawn and Keane 2011: 156), which resonates with Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*. Vattimo prefers conflict to pacification that might be brought by the “objectivity” of new realism, which tends to confine ontology to a description of what things are. For him a hermeneutical approach, which accepts the risk of open dialectics, is more relevant than the scientific objectivists’, in line with his argument that “[t]he truth is (only) what sets you free” (Vattimo 2014). For this reason, it is thought that hermeneutic ontology represents an opportunity for change, which is an emergency in an age which is under the threat of “total subordination of reason to metaphysical reality” (Zobala 2014: 78). In this sense, an event ontology is not only related to thinking on change but also thinking for the change.

2.2 Heidegger’s Understanding of Event: *Ereignis*

Gadamer acknowledges himself as both “a follower” and “one who stayed behind” Heidegger, while at the same time “resisting some of Heidegger’s bolder and more enigmatic claims”. Even though Gadamer is “Heideggerian”, they have their differences. Gadamer shares Heidegger’s willingness to bring the abstract and

technical language of philosophy back to the ground of saying. Gadamer's emphasis on conversation or Heidegger's reformulation of concepts can be considered as indications of this attitude. They both share the ground of "from concept to the word" with their emphasis on saying. However, unlike Heidegger, Gadamer does not try to dismantle Western metaphysics, he rather tries to find resources both from metaphysics and concepts. Sharing Heidegger's intellectual revolt against traditional metaphysics, he does not have a resolute rejection of pure transcendence, as he uses the Hegelian conceptions of the ideal and the absolute, as well as the platonic categories of goodness and beauty throughout his work (Arthos 2013: 10). Gadamer builds his dialogical model (logic of question and answer) inspiring from Plato, whom Heidegger includes within his efforts of dismantling.

Their attitude to dialogical model is also among their differences. Dialogical model is based on not having the first or the last word, but a continuing conversation, indicating a divergence from Heidegger's passion about beginnings (Keane 2021: 257-260). Gadamer's dialogical model also reflects his unease with Heidegger's analysis of the other, as he thinks that the other is more important than Heidegger had assumed because the other opens up the real possibility of understanding (Keane and Lawn 2011: 68). Dialogue is the mode of thinking with the other.

It is crucial to note that while we are elaborating on Gadamer's or Heidegger's understandings of event, we are not referring to any event, but the events of understanding and interpretation for Gadamer and the event of Being for Heidegger (Grondin 2014: 63-67). Gadamer's understanding of art as event and understanding of event builds very much upon Heidegger's insight. For Heidegger, contrary to the conception of truth as correspondence or representation, art is happening (*Ereignis*) of truth, event. According to Heidegger, truth does not exist beforehand. Truth is un-truth as it belongs to the reservoir of the not-yet-uncovered. It happens by establishing itself in the conflict. Truth is the opposition of clearing and concealing. (Heidegger 1971: 58-59). Heidegger claims that, "art is: the creative preserving of truth in the work. Art then is the becoming and happening of truth" (Heidegger 1971: 69). The happening of truth is something more than truth making. Because even in truth making, there might be an understanding that indicates that truths are made and completed. However, when truths are happening, we cannot speak of a completion.

Ereignis (the event) is the simplest and gentlest of all laws about how entities become manifest as what they are. *Ereignis* becomes the main concept of Heidegger's late thinking, since 1936 (Wrathall 2021:19). Even though *Ereignis* is also translated as enowning, adaptation or event of appropriation in English, in this work I use "event" as the translation of the term, in line with Julian Young, Kenneth Haynes and Jeff Malpas. James Bahoh also claims that 'event' is indeed the best option for translating after informing that "Heidegger stated that his term should not be translated in terms of the regular meaning of 'event', that is, in the sense of an intra-temporal occurrence or incident". Bahoh, justifies his preference for the translation of the term as "event" claiming that it is a "standard translation, a recognizable and ordinary term, and does not carry the excessive theory-ladenness of the other options" (Bahoh 2020:10-11).

Three main elements of Heidegger's "*Ereignis*" are the idea of event/happening, gathering/belonging and disclosing/revealing. The idea of *Ereignis* as Event or happening is important inasmuch as it constitutes a move away from the static idea of being as presence in the present that, according to Heidegger, has dominated the philosophical thinking of the West since the Greeks (Malpas 2006: 215). Heidegger thinks in terms of "presencing" rather than presence. Gathering/belonging indicates the unity that is a key element in *Ereignis*. It is a unity that arises through the interaction of elements rather than through their mere "standing near" to one another. The sense of "belonging" or "being proper to" are elements that are mainly reflected in the translation of *Ereignis* as "enowning". The idea of "happening of belonging" in "the sense of a gathering or bringing of things into what is their own" is in line with Heidegger's notion of "authenticity". "[W]hat is at issue here is a certain sort of unifying of elements in which things are brought into a unity to which they already belong". Disclosing/revealing element in *Ereignis* is about "coming to sight", "being made evident" in the "moment of vision". This also refers to the notions of disclosedness and of revealing/concealing (Malpas 2006: 215). The revealing and concealing aspect of *Ereignis* also find words in the famous saying by René Magritte, "Everything we see hides another thing" (Magritte 1977).

"Ereignis" is the name for the particular sort of unifying and differentiating happening by which things come to presence, by which they come to be... The way in which these elements are combined in the one term also means that "*Ereignis*" connects up in significant ways with other terms such as "clearing," "the Open," "*aletheia*," as well as

“being” itself. “*Ereignis*” is thus a notion of originary gathering, which gathers together almost the entirety of Heidegger’s thinking (Malpas 2006: 216).

Heidegger’s thinking of “event” is deeply involved with his later conception of the fourfold, which actually seems to be a further elaboration from the strife between “world” and “earth” of his earlier thinking. According to Mitchell, “[t]he fourfold is the key to understanding this streaming, mediated, relationality of finite, worldly existence”. The fourfold consists of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities (gods). Mitchell emphasizes their relationality and intersection, putting *Ereignis* at the center (Mitchell 2015: 3). In his earlier thinking, Heidegger assumed a “strife” between earth and world. With the conception of the fourfold, this dual thinking is enhanced. With his fourfold, Heidegger assumes a “belonging to one another within the belonging together” between earth, sky (which was initially world), mortals, and divinities. In other words, an interplay of “belonging and differing” takes place of a “strife or conflict”. (Malpas 2006: 233). The evolving nature of his understanding is noteworthy to reflect the adapting and moving in Heidegger’s thinking. According to me, Heidegger’s thinking also unfolds as a happening, *Ereignis*.

Heidegger’s thinking is different from the calculating and maximizing thinking, based mainly on efficiency and utility, that is prevalent in modern science. Heidegger relates this mode of thinking, with the essence of technology which is not technological and calls this *Gestell* (Enframing, the Framework) (Heidegger 1977: 288). This kind of thinking is different from the Event (*Ereignis*) as they define two contrary attitudes. Malpas displays this difference by referring to the Le Thor Seminar in which Heidegger remarks “the Framework [*Gestell*] is, as it were, the photographic negative of the Event [*Ereignis*]” (Malpas 2006: 288). According to Heidegger there is a threat about Enframing. The danger of Enframing is related to its prevention of the Event because it constricts the Event, generating a self-ordering technological system that transforms everything into interchangeable data” (Zimmerman 2021: 724). It seems that there is mainly one mode of Enframing while there are many modes of the Event as infinitely more are possible.

An event is a “disclosive gathering of belonging”, happening and gathering of the fourfold in the revealing of “letting be” of things. Event is a “sparing and preserving”, a “caring for”, a “sheltering” that also “clears” in relation to dwelling. In line with

Heidegger's understanding of *aletheia*, the thing is both revealed and concealed, preserved and "sheltered". This is a happening of revealing beyond our conceptions of correspondence and representation.

Heidegger repeatedly stated that *Aletheia* is another name for Being – and we recognize this as his truly original and distinctive position on "truth": "Truth" is in the first place the unending temporal unfolding, the radiant emergence, of all that is. To put this succinctly, "is-ing" is "true-ing." (Capobianco 2022: 60).

The Event is about the value of limits that tend to become forgotten by the globalizing diffusion of Enframing. In principle, the limit is about the bound of a thing. A place that which things are bound to it and as it is bound to the thing is not limitless. Event is essentially related to the limits of place and dwelling. The event is also defined as the "disclosive gathering of belonging", which emphasizes the limit as a proper relatedness to the world and ourselves, in a recognition of our being in that very place where we already are" (Malpas 2006: 299). The event has a topological character because "presencing" never occurs in some indeterminate "nowhere". The event is always a happening of place in place" (Malpas 2006: 214).

The Event as a happening of place endures historically as well. I understand that being historical is not synonymous with being an occurrence in time, as place is not synonymous with space. "Things have manifested themselves otherwise in the past, and they can do so once again in the future. Insight into the temporary nature of the [Enframing] can give rise to "releasement" (*Gelassenheit*), which allows us to twist free from it" (Zimmerman 2021: 725). For Heidegger, "*Gelassenheit*," means "releasement toward things" with the connotations of "composure" and "tranquility.

While on the one hand it is clear that this is no ordinary happening—just as being is not a being among other beings, so the Event is not an event among other events. Yet there is also a sense in which Heidegger talks of the Event as something that "happens" to us— something in which we are "taken up" and "transformed." Thus Julian Young talks of the Event as an "experience of 'transport and enchantment.'" (Malpas 2006: 218).

Ereignis is highly related to art. Capobianco mentions how Heidegger considers *aletheia* as the provenance of art. According to him, "that-by-which all such beings come to be is what the ancient Greeks named *physis*" However, with the advance of Roman thinking, the ancient Greeks' understanding of *physis* becomes narrowed down to mean *natura*. I think that this adaptation in the meaning can be considered as one

example about the shift in understanding away from “happening”. Capobianco emphasizes that according to Heidegger “*physis* is another name for Being” and “Art is a ‘correspondence’ to and with *physis*... Our ‘artful’ gathering corresponds with the primary gathering of *physis*” (Capobianco 2022: 57-59).

For Heidegger, the structure of the work of art is ontological rather than formal. This means first of all that the work of art is not an aesthetic object but an event that can be characterized phenomenologically in terms of disclosure or coming into the light of being: the work of the work of art is an opening up of the world to time and history (Bruns 1997: 12).

For Heidegger poetically dwelling and art as a happening of truth are the events with the power to save us to let things and ourselves be as they are. Works and art are ongoing. This understanding is also reflected in the independence, in the self-sufficiency of the work and the inconsequential position of the artist. “...we have indicated in the work rather a happening and in no sense a repose” (Heidegger 1971: 47). Event indicates truth for Heidegger. “We come to articulate the nature of being as event” (Bahoh 2020: 20).

2.3 Event as Meaning and Understanding According to Gadamer

Thinking in terms of events is an important aspect of Gadamer’s philosophy. It is known that he even intended to give his major work *Truth and Method*, the title “Understanding and Event” (*Verstehen und Geschehen*). According to Gadamer, meaning is event because it is not finding out a pre-existing content but a matter of ongoing participation and belonging together. Meanings occur and happen. Meaning is an event for it consists of a speculative movement rather than a static phenomenon. Meaning is not independently referring to something outside language; it is being made inside the language in a way that is never complete but always ongoing.

Understanding is not discovering an essence that is awaiting underneath a cover. “Understanding must be conceived as a part of the event in which meaning occurs, the event in which the meaning of all statements—those of art and all other kinds of tradition—is formed and actualized” (Gadamer 1989: 64). Meaning happens in a process of never-ending attitude of interpretation, according to Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics. “[T]hinking understandably is a movement of thought” (Davey 2021: 62). For Gadamer, hermeneutical experience and understanding are not

methodological practices but events of truth characterized by genuine encounters. Meaning is an event in two ways; how we come to understand is an event and meaning itself is an event. These two aspects of his thinking are not independent of one another. They comprise a unified whole.

[T]he whole value of hermeneutical experience—like the significance of history for human knowledge in general—seemed to consist in the fact that here we are not simply filing things in pigeonholes but that what we encounter in a tradition says something to us. Understanding, then, does not consist in a technical virtuosity of “understanding” everything written. Rather, it is a genuine experience (*Erfahrung*)—i.e., an encounter with something that asserts itself as truth (Gadamer 1989: 504).

Gadamer does not agree with the traditional idea of meanings as representing objects. For him meanings are not self-contained entities making reference to an established content. Meanings are not about attaining what was already settled, what is already there. Meanings are not separate entities; they are occurrences that are constituted by different circumstances. Meanings are embedded in wider context. Gadamer calls this occasionality. “Occasionality means that... meaning and contents are determined by the occasion for which they are intended, so that they contain more than they would without this occasion” (Gadamer 1989: 144). In other words, occasion augments the meaning. The occasionality of meaning undermines an understanding of meaning that is constructed as a pregiven relation. “Meaning always happens differently owing to the different circumstances in which it occurs” (DaVia and Lynch 2024:16). Occasionality allows that there is always more to the meaning. Meaning is more than what is said and it can never be exhausted. Therefore, understanding is always incomplete. While this could be a reason for worry for traditional hermeneuticians such as Dilthey, Gadamer celebrates this inconclusiveness of understanding (Davey 2013: 1).

Despite Gadamer’s emphasis on occasionality, that is the relevance of context for understanding, understanding across contexts is not out of question. We do not need to understand each context in detail in order to understand something. The fact that meaning is occasion bound does not prevent an integrity regarding meaning that allows us to communicate across contexts. Gadamer might be criticized on the ground that any interpretation might be valid when one’s understanding does not need to correspond to an object. Emilio Betti and Kristin Gjesdal are among those who criticize him in this respect. (DaVia and Lynch 2024). If there is no correct

understanding, it might appear as if all understanding has the same value. However, Gadamer does not think in this way. Gadamer expects that what is to be understood, in other words the text has to be intelligible and internally coherent².

Gadamer has a subtle position which is difficult to grasp clearly in this respect. He argues that language is shareable across contexts due to the ideality of meaning, which implies a unified whole despite the variety of cases in which meaning is filled out differently. Even though we must always understand in a different way, understanding is not without its unity, indicating its ideality (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 75). Ideality enables the same subject matter to present itself in a variety of different situations (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 128).

...in each case it is one and the same meaning that is understood. Each understanding is an understanding of the same vocative semantic whole, the same statement. The irreducible difference that occasionality and application introduce to understanding does not negate the unity and continuity of meaning. Like a symphony or a drama, the one meaning exists precisely in and through these differences (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 75-76).

In this line, Gadamer claims that even though our understanding of the tragic from the time of Aristotle to the present is not an unchanging essence, this variety does not prevent that there is a unity of object about what is meant by the term. There is nevertheless a “a continuity of meaning which links the work of art with the existing world” (Gadamer 1989: 131-135). Edward Said’s words reveal his understanding of ideality which sets the possible extent of interpretation from the point of the work’s identity, in line with Gadamer’s understanding of unity. In this sense, Said’s words appear like an answer to the question of the freedom of interpretation or performance from the point of the identity of the work.

Nevertheless, I think that we all feel, as interpreters, readers, or, in the case of music, performers, that, in producing a performance or a reading, the text is not an infinitely malleable object... I think it’s important to say that, so it isn’t completely open to do or interpret in whatever way one chooses. I mean, we know what a travesty it would be, for example, if somebody decided to put on *King Lear* as a comedy. It’s just something basically wrong. Or *Othello* as a farce. It just doesn’t work (Barenboim and Said 2003: 116).

² Gadamer calls this the “fore-conception of completeness” (Vorgriff der Vollkommenheit) (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 12).

I think that this insight also contributes to explaining why understanding art cannot be explained on the ground of subjectivity. Even though it is not subjective for Gadamer there is no such thing as ‘the objectively right way’ to understand. His hermeneutics is not after interpreting correctly; this attitude results in the question of misunderstanding and normativity of understanding. It might be suggested that according to Gadamer, the failure to understand is not mis-understanding but non-understanding. Gadamer does not argue that any interpretation is meaningful. Since meanings are events, for Gadamer “correctness is a matter of proper participation, not right representation” (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 83). An interpretation that is participatory, demands to let the text speak itself and be receptive for a hearing that is analogous to the attitude of Heidegger’s “*Gelassenheit*,” which means “releasement toward things”. Participation in meaning is about listening to what the text might be saying in an open way.

To interpret a text is to strive to enter into the event that it opens up, and this striving carries with it, as a constitutive moment, the responsibility to open ourselves up to the truth of what the text has to say (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 113).

Openness and participation are the aim of interpretation; not to find out the correct or the intended correspondence. This attitude is in line with Heidegger’s opinion “...the merely correct is not yet the true” (Heidegger 1977: 289). Being open is to make the effort to encounter the subject matter without one’s own preferences, expectations or preconceptions and to be able to allow the event of meaning. “To understand is precisely to participate, as yourself, in the event of meaning. It is to allow the subject matter to make itself intelligibly present to you” (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 8).

It is crucial to note that openness is not the lack of prejudice for Gadamer. “Prejudice” is a crucial concept for Gadamer and he does not suggest elimination of prejudices for he considers them important and in fact needed for understanding, as bridges that enable it. He merely wants to put them at risk or to allow them a possibility of movement and change by a genuine encounter. Openness is needed for letting world’s self-showing itself and for understanding what is offering itself to be understood. This is the participation suggested by Gadamer in the event of meaning. Openness is also the condition of dialogical thinking, which is necessary for Gadamer’s hermeneutics. It is only when the subject is genuinely open, what is communicated can be a dialogue.

Dialogue and conversation are the two key movements that account for the motion of meaning and understanding for Gadamer. These two are not the only events that are made with language, but they are what is lurking in the ontology of language and they account for making the language itself an event, because they enable the movement of words, concepts and meaning. Conversation and dialogue are both ongoing engagements, without an ultimate completion. They imply that no opinion or judgment is final. There is always a possibility of saying some more. This makes us encounter the limits of understanding and our essential finitude, which is one more reason for the continuation of the engagement. Besides this, genuine dialogue and conversation require the openness, which is actually an acknowledgement of the possibility of the “other”. “Conversation... rejuvenates and sustains the living house of our being” (Davey 2021: 70). In order to better understand the nature of dialogical thinking which is the mode for Gadamer’s event ontology, it is useful to emphasize its difference from Platonic dialogue. Unlike Gadamer’s, in Platonic dialogue, there is the motivation to reach a final truth with the means of a representational language.

Platonic dialogue and dialectic seeks to ascend to the truth of a form or subject- matter conceived within a pure intellectual intuition transcending linguistic articulation. However, for the Gadamerian mind, the truth of a subject- matter resides within language and not beyond it (Davey 2021: 69).

Contemporaneity is an important concept for Gadamer. It defines a particular mode of temporality that is particularly valid for works of art. Understanding contemporaneity is also important for how meaning is an event for Gadamer. Contemporaneity answers the question of how to understand a work in its stretch of time from past to present and how to handle the variety of presentations and their difference among each occurrence. Gadamer does not assign the original or a chosen presentation (of an artwork) privilege over others. Gadamer claims that “every repetition is as original as the work itself” (Gadamer 1989: 126).

A work of art does not belong to a specific era, for instance the time it was created, rather it is “contemporaneous with every age” without “completely los[ing] the trace of its original function” (Gadamer 1989:124). It is the identity that presents itself in variety in different ages and circumstances, without disintegrating. Contemporaneity refers to location as well, because a work is not only contemporaneous in time, but also among the different places it happens. All presentations and interpretations of a

work even the ones that will be made in the future are contemporaneous since they belong to each other (*ibid.*).

Contemporaneity is a mode of understanding among others. It refers to neither the timeless nor the historic. “Contemporaneity, then, is not just a distinctive mode of temporality but a distinctive mode of ideality... contemporaneity is *sui generis*. It cannot be reduced to, or explained in terms of other more familiar sorts of relationships” (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 56). It would be misleading to translate contemporaneity as a part-whole relationship. An important feature of contemporaneity is its emphasis on belonging together, that defies thinking in terms of reduction or abstraction. It is this attitude of understanding that particularly makes it specifically a relevant concept for event ontology. Contemporaneity undermines the understanding of completion, while retaining a work’s unitary character, which is implied by its textuality, its eminence and its saying power that surpasses its contextuality. Contemporaneity indicates the continuation of a work’s understanding in a way that defies a stable meaning or essence. It reflects the movement within meaning across time and space. It is one reason why meaning becomes an event in every hermeneutic experience. Contemporaneity shows us the puzzling way the meaning travels from past to future.

Edward Said questions Daniel Barenboim about how he feels about distorting works from the past for their contemporary conduction, by giving the example that Beethoven symphonies were originally written for smaller orchestras than the contemporary ones. Said asks Barenboim how he deals with this constant going back between the requirements of the past and the present in a similar tone to Gadamer’s elaboration of the question of contemporaneity (Barenboim and Said 2003: 51-52). Barenboim answers as follows:

I think that every great work of art has two faces: one toward its own time and one toward eternity. In other words, there are certain aspects of a Mozart symphony or a Mozart opera that are clearly linked to their time and they have no relevance today... But there is something that is timeless about this music, and that aspect of it has to be performed with a sense of discovery. ... Timeless in the sense that it is not only limited to that time, it is permanently contemporary. This does not apply to every piece (Barenboim and Said 2003: 52).

Even though Gadamer's contemporaneity encompasses more than the timeless element, he does not deny the existence of such an element. I think that Barenboim's words explain Gadamer's understanding of contemporaneity from the point of the work's ideality. While the face of the work that is toward its own time displays its contemporaneous aspect, its face toward eternity indicates its ideality. Gadamer says "the work of art occupies a timeless present" (2007: 125) which is similar to what Barenboim calls "permanently contemporary". It should also be considered that contemporaneity encompasses also the meaning that is yet to emerge.

A text does not merely indicate something about what others thought in the past; it speaks to us in the present... The fact that language can take the form of a text is the key to seeing how meaning can be shared across contexts (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 70).

Language is at the heart of Gadamer's thinking, because it enables the textuality that anchors the meaning, by enabling its unitary character. He does not perceive language as an intermediary between understanding and the world but as the medium which enables the condition of understanding. For him language is not representational but presentational, "language participates in events of meaning by providing the medium in which the event transpires, the "medium in which I and world meet, or, rather, manifest their original belonging together" (Gadamer 1989: 490). According to Gadamer even word has the ontological character of an event (Gadamer 1989: 439). This is not to say that word is an event because it is an utterance; there is much more happening within the word.

Word and thing belong together. This thinking is different from the thinking that considers language on mainly grounds of expression. When word and thing belong together, language is not an exteriorized signification (Lawn and Keane 2011: 101). Language is rather included in the thing, in the event of belonging together different from a detached signification.

Word has its truth in its inner infinity that points beyond itself reminding Heidegger's conception of *aletheia*. The inner infinity of the word enables it to surpass the sphere of the discourse it is uttered. In this sense, it can be argued that even the word, which has representative characteristic has also a dimension that presents itself. The word has its standing and it does not disappear in the communication by only conveying a

message, rather it has its temporal uniqueness as it is suggested by Heidegger's understanding of event, *Ereignis*. Word breaks silence and Gadamer perceives an existential relation between hearing and keeping silent in this event of language.³ Gadamer highlights how the "word" involves an inner necessity according to Heidegger, indicating that it is not only a disclosure but a hiding and sheltering in which truth happens (Gadamer 2002: 116-118).

Nevertheless, "the" word is not just the individual word. Nor is it just the singular form of "the words," or of the words that constitute the discourse. Rather, this expression is linked to a usage according to which "the word" has a collective meaning and implies a social relationship... but one must nevertheless keep in mind that the Word "dwells among men"... In the end, it is always the word that "stands,"... "it stands written" and it documents itself. It is with regard to these ways of being a word, which in accordance with their inherent validity "do things" rather than merely communicate something true... (Gadamer 2002:115)

"[E]very word, as the event of the moment carries with it the unsaid" (Davey 2021: 64-65), reminding us the un-truth of truth as claimed by Heidegger. In the standing of the word, in its authenticity; there is a truth which is other than the truth of what it communicates, namely its message. In his elaboration on the truth of word, Gadamer is mainly interested in the word that speaks, the telling word that stands and makes a lasting claim. For instance, a legal declaration made before a court has its truth value within the scope of the investigation and not further. Therefore, the event-character of such declarations is weak. Written notes or reminders are also such kinds of words, they mainly support memory without putting forward their own statement (Gadamer 2002: 118-119). Such words do not stand but vanish once their function of conveying is completed. However poetic word continues its saying. Gadamer gives the example of modern visual art in order to display how meaning can be more than the communicative content. Modern visual art makes us understand that the truth of the work of art, can surpass communicative content without being irrelevant, like a poetic word (Gadamer 2002: 126).

³ It is interesting that Gadamer's understanding of word resembles Barenboim's understanding of music for he writes how music both defies and encompasses silence" (Barenboim and Said 2003: 23).

The saying character of the word is mainly high in the religious, juridical and literary texts because what resides in these words is more important than the circumstances they are uttered. Among these three types of texts, Gadamer mainly focuses on literary works, arguing that they have their standing because they are not representations of another original, but they themselves are the original. Gadamer refers to Heidegger's idea that the true word comes forth in poetry as the true being of colors emerge in painting. This means that, in poetry "the word speaks more tellingly than anywhere else" (Gadamer 2002: 23).

It is crucial to note that such a saying is independent from the psychological intentions of the author. The important thing is the saying of the word or the text, not the author's; because even the author has to listen and interpret. "What is truly unique is the fact that a literary text raises its voice from itself, so to speak, and speaks in nobody's name" (Gadamer 2002: 124). Gadamer is interested in the saying power of the word in its self-reference. This saying power is related not to the single sense that is communicated in the word, but to what the word is possible to say in the wide possibility of the language that can always surpass the predefined.

The word is not an element of the world like colors or forms that can be fitted into a new order of things. Rather, every word is itself already an element of a new order of things and therefore is itself potentially and entirely this order. When a word resonates, a whole language and everything it is able to say is called forth-and it knows how to say everything. So what comes out in the word that "speaks" more is not so much a single sensory element of the world but rather the presence of the whole built through language (Gadamer 2002: 130-131).

"[U]nderstanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else's meaning" (Gadamer 1989:383). Gadamer's understanding of hermeneutics does not aim at uncovering what the author had intended. If the aim of hermeneutics were particularly confined to the author's intention, its eventual nature would be less crucial, because there would be a possibility of completion for understanding. However, as the work achieves its independence from its author, once it is created, it becomes open to future meanings. Barenboim also asserts a similar opinion in his words: "The moment a composer like Beethoven has actually finished writing a piece, that piece becomes independent of him. It becomes part of the world" (Barenboim and Said 2003: 143).

Furthermore, if the meaning was confined to the intention of its author, the participation element of understanding would not be much relevant. If the aim of understanding was to understand the meaning implied by the author, it would mainly be accessing a horizon, it would not be a fusion of horizons. Fusion of horizons is an interesting concept because it also pays homage to the intention of the author, while not assigning it a primacy, because one of the horizons that enter into fusion is that of the author. In other words, while Gadamer is explicit that he is not an originalist thinker, it is also clear that he is not an anti-originalist either.

Gadamer appropriates the term 'horizon' from Husserl's phenomenology. While Husserl elaborates on horizons from the point of perceptions, Gadamer uses the term for understanding within language. It is crucial to note that Gadamer's horizon is a combination of both the everyday meaning and technical sense of the terms which are not unrelated. Gadamer's horizon does not emphasize horizon as a limit as suggested by its daily usage, which particularly marks the limit of sight. Gadamer's horizon is something which expands. "[Horizon] points toward something more... Horizons might function as a limit at a particular time, but they are always also gate ways to something beyond" (Vessey 2009: 533).

The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth. Since Nietzsche and Husserl the word has been used in philosophy, to characterize the way in which thought is tied to its finite determinacy, and the way one's range of vision is gradually expanded... "[T]o have a horizon" means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it (Gadamer 1989: 313).

Horizon is one reason why understanding is an event, a movement. "A horizon is not a rigid boundary but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further" (Gadamer 1989: 247). Each understanding happens within the movement of horizons. Different horizons fuse in each event of understanding. For instance, a single novel's reading causes different fusions of horizons within different readers, or even different ages of the same person. Edward Said's explanation about reading experience also exemplify how each person's reading is a unique event of interpretation that is related to their different horizons. Therefore, reading is not predictable.

So, when I read, let's say, a play by Shakespeare and then a novel by Dickens, they are totally different kinds of works... And yet, I am the same person reading them.

And so, I'm conscious of a certain set of interests that I bring, as reader, which would not necessarily be the same as those of another reader. So, I notice a certain continuity in my own style of reading, which extends through the works that I read and try to interpret. For me, it seems that one of the things that one doesn't want to do is to be predictable... (Barenboim and Said 2003: 32).

There are layers of event about understanding. Understanding is not only about planes of understanding, that are moving in relation to one another. The planes themselves are also in movement. Gadamer says, “[t]he horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving” (Gadamer 1989: 315). For Gadamer, it is not only present horizons that are moving, there is also an element of movement for the horizons of the past; Gadamer claims “the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion” (*ibid.*). There is a temporal dimension of horizons which also extends to the future because horizons also open up possibilities for future perceptions (Vessey 2009: 536).

Like Heidegger's, Gadamer's notion of understanding has also a practical basis, rather than cognitive. Accordingly, understanding is more related to exercising a practical skill, rather than having a knowledge; as in the example of a good cook who is not a theoretician of cooking. Aristotle's notion of practical understanding (*phronesis*) is crucial for Gadamer (Grondin 2002: 37-38). The fact that speech takes more place than propositional thinking in their philosophizing is also related to this practical basis. The practical foundations of thinking relate understanding as event to the actual events of life. This amounts to the complex interplay between meaning, truth and life.

Meaning as event has an ontological relevance that surpasses the limits of traditional meaning that is mainly a signification or representation. Understanding is not a subjective relation to an object; it is an event of belonging together, “understanding belongs to the being of that which is understood” (Gadamer 1989: xxviii). According to Gadamer, language is fundamentally factual.⁴ “Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a world at all” (Gadamer 1989: 459). In this sense there is a unique relation between the world, human and language. According to Gadamer only humans are in the world, which is actually

⁴ It should not be confused with objectivity, which is a characteristic of natural sciences (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 114).

a verbal phenomenon, because animals are in the “environment”. Language is not independent from the world. In other words, world comes to language and language has its real being because of the world that is presented in it. Human’s being-in-the-world is linguistic (*ibid.*). “Thought is dependent upon the ground of language insofar as language is not merely a system of signs for the purpose of communication and transmission of information (Gadamer 1976: 115). This dynamic relation between the world and language contributes to the event of meaning. Language constitutes our being in the world. Language makes the world.

Language is not an independent entity that refers to the world from a distance. They are in touch with each other and they make up each other. If they were independent and their relation was merely in the mode of representation or signification; it would be possible to conceptualize meaning as a more static phenomenon. But for Gadamer language itself is factual and the world presents itself in language, implying an interrelation, a belonging together between meaning and truth. This strong interrelation is emphasized by Gadamer’s well-known dictum “being that can be understood is language” (Gadamer 1989: 490). This understanding contributes to the understanding of meaning as event, because as meaning becomes more worldly and more substantive, it starts to move or happen in line with the world, to which it belongs. In such an understanding, language becomes less a matter of abstraction and more a living body.

That which can be understood is language. This means that it is of such a nature that of itself it offers itself to be understood. Here too is confirmed the speculative structure of language. To come into language does not mean that a second being is acquired. Rather, what something presents itself as belongs to its own being. Thus everything that is language has a speculative unity: it contains a distinction, that between its being and its presentations of itself, but this is a distinction that is really not a distinction at all... The speculative mode of being of language has a universal ontological significance (Gadamer 1989: 491).

When Gadamer claims that “[t]hat which can be understood is language”, he is actually suggesting an identity between the language and its subject matter. As subject matters are what the language refers to, language also make up the subject matter by referring. This is a collective achievement of the language. Subject matters are culturally made by the language, by the multiplicity of perspectives it contains. They are not isolated structures in purity. To speak a language is to live in a speech created world. This is

the constructivist aspect of Gadamer's language ontology (Davey 2021: 68-69) and it is part of the speculative nature of the event of language.

CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING OF ART

Gadamer's "The Truth of the Work of Art" (1960) was written as an introduction to the Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" (Nielsen 2023: 59). Gadamer's understanding of art can be considered as both a continuation and a response to Heidegger's understanding, with his unique ideas reflected in their diverging philosophical styles. I think that Gadamer's idea that understanding art is an event is highly related to Heidegger's *Ereignis*. Both philosophers thinking is based on the happening of art, which surpasses the subject-object dichotomy, which indicates a relation of detachment without the participatory engagement or belonging together as emphasized by Heidegger and Gadamer. Art is a happening of truth that is directly interested in and within life, for both of them.

3.1. Heidegger's Understanding of Art

Heidegger's thinking on art is mainly in line with and an arguably an extension of his ontology of Being. Heidegger diverges from the aesthetic tradition, which according to him, rests on subject-object opposition, within the framework of sensory apprehension. For Heidegger, art is historical happening of truth, as it is indicated by *Ereignis*. It is an event of truth that is to be participated rather than sensed from a distance. Truth is un-truth as the not-yet-uncovered also belongs to it. It happens by establishing itself in the conflict. Truth is the opposition of clearing and concealing. (Heidegger 1971: 58-59). This is why truth is a movement, rather than a static insight to be grasped and completed. Heidegger claims that, "art is: the creative preserving of

truth in the work. Art then is the becoming and happening of truth” (Heidegger 1971: 69).

Art as the happening of truth is different from the art that is elaborated by aesthetics. It is relevant to look into the origins of Heidegger’s thinking on art to understand in what way he diverges from the tradition of philosophy of art that is shaped within aesthetics. In his “The Origin of the Work of Art”, which heavily deals with the link between art and truth, after a display of the hermeneutic circle between the artist and artwork in the question of the art’s origin; Heidegger deals with the question, focusing on the nature of art. He starts his elaboration by both referring to the thingly character of the work and how it is more than that. “All works have this thingly character... the art work is something else over and above the thingly element... This something else in the work constitutes its artistic nature. The art work is, to be sure, a thing that is made, but it says something other than the mere thing itself” (Heidegger 1971: 19). If it were mainly thingly, it would not be saying more than itself; therefore, we could complete our understanding of the work at the level of our sensual access. However, it is more than that due to its *Ereignis* characteristic which implies its eventual nature. The art work is a happening that prevents completion of understanding.

Heidegger displays mainly three modes of thingness in the history of truth about beings, whose combinations were also possible and made (Heidegger 1971: 30). They are: bearer of traits, unity of a manifold sensations and formed matter. However, Heidegger does not agree with this understanding, referring to the hardship of its compatibility with letting the thing “rest upon itself in its very own being”. Heidegger argues that this way of interpretation of the thing, in line with the Western thought, is resisted by the thing. “The unpretentious thing evades thought most stubbornly. Or can it be that this self-refusal of the mere thing, this self-contained independence, belongs precisely to the nature of the thing?” (Heidegger 1971: 31). Heidegger is not satisfied with the history of understanding of the things as it is understood in Western Philosophy. He looks for “the deeper origin”. *Ereignis*, being built on the root verb ‘*sich eignen*’ can take us to our phenomenological attitude to understanding things themselves. Dreyfus considers Heidegger the first one to define art with ontological implications (2005: 411). This suggests that the history of art could be written as a function of the history of truth in line with Heidegger’s thinking (Harries 2009: 96).

Referring to Van Gogh's painting of shoes, Heidegger claims that "the art work lets us know what shoes are in truth... This entity emerges into the unconcealedness of its being... then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work" (Heidegger 1971: 35). The painting reveals more than the shoes as things. For Heidegger art is a happening of truth. He relates this thinking to the Greek term, *aletheia*, the unconcealedness of beings. Capobianco mentions how Heidegger considers *aletheia* as the provenance of art. According to him, "that-by-which all such beings come to be is what the ancient Greeks named physis" (Capobianco 2022: 57). However, with the advance of Roman thinking, Greek's understanding of physis becomes narrowed down to mean natura. I think that this adaptation in the meaning can be considered as one example about the shift in understanding away from "happening". Capobianco emphasizes that according to Heidegger "physis is another name for Being" and "Art is a 'correspondence' to and with physis... Our 'artful' gathering corresponds with the primary gathering of physis" (Capobianco 2022: 57-59).

In line with his general ontology, art is the happening of truth for Heidegger, contrary to the conception of truth as correspondence. Heidegger's understanding of truth as happening, as unfolding, as emergence and as essentially a temporal phenomenon is one of his main features that finds its source in Greek thinking and understanding of *aletheia*. Heidegger has revolutionized Western thinking with the retrieval of thinking in Greek philosophy (Maly 2022: 3). Western thinking of art in terms of aesthetics had taken place of the Greek understanding of *aletheia*. According to aesthetics, starting with its identification by Baumgarten in 18th Century, truth and art belong to different realms. Therefore, there is a "rivalry of the aesthetic and the ontological approaches to art". In the aesthetic approach, work of art is judged as beautiful or sublime. Aesthetic approach pays attention to the subject's apprehension and regards works of art as something to be enjoyed (Harries 2009: 6-7). Aesthetic art fails to be great art, because it considers art as an option, but not a necessity (Young 2001:12). Heidegger is a dedicated and a leading opponent of aesthetic understanding of art.

Almost from the time when specialized thinking about art and the artist began, this thought was called aesthetic. Aesthetics takes the work of art as an object, the object of aisthesis, of sensuous apprehension in the wild sense. Today we call this apprehension experience... Yet perhaps experience is the element in which art dies. The dying occurs so slowly that it takes a few centuries. (Heidegger 1971:77).

Heidegger thinks that experiencing art as a subject that experiences an object is the dying of art. Heidegger's thinking on the death of art is preceded by Hegel's similar but different opinions⁵. Both Heidegger and Hegel agree that great art "has departed from among men". Heidegger quotes Hegel's saying:

Art no longer counts for us as the highest manner in which truth obtains existence for itself. One may well hope that art will continue to advance and perfect itself, but its form has ceased to be the highest need of the spirit. In all these relationships art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation, something past (Hegel, cited in Heidegger 1971: 77).

Even though Hegel and Heidegger are in agreement with the end of great art, that lets us encounter things differently; they have different perspectives. In a way defying the possible criticisms towards Hegel, that give examples of great art after its so-called death; Heidegger claims that "the truth of Hegel's judgment has not yet been decided" (Heidegger 1971: 78). However, their perspectives are different because while Hegel indicates an ultimate end of great art, Heidegger's understanding is still pregnant with further unfoldings of truth in art.

Heidegger's happening of truth in art, is a thinking that has its differences from the understanding of Hegel's, from other dimensions as well. The aesthetic approach divorces beauty and truth, "... this divorce, Heidegger claims, following Hegel, is a consequence of a development of thought that has shaped the world we live in today" (Harries 2009: 6-7). In Hegel's understanding, art is a certain manner of expressing and representing the true. In other words, art is about the truth of what is, but not a happening of truth, not truth as a disclosure (Harries 2009: 7-13). This understanding of truth is different from Heidegger's, which is an event of truth.⁶ Heidegger is critical about the truth that has mainly been regarded from the point of correctness or correspondence, conforming to something.

Truth means today and has long meant the agreement or conformity of knowledge with fact... A proposition is true by conforming to the unconcealed, to what is true... The critical concepts of truth which, since Descartes, start out from truth as certainty, are merely variations of the definition of truth as correctness. This nature of truth

⁵ I do not refer to the famous "the end of the art argument" by Arthur Danto in this work, because I think like Harries (2009: 11), that Danto's argument is from a different perspective and within the scope of aesthetic approach.

⁶ Gadamer also departs from Hegel's idealistic aesthetics because of "its failure to appreciate art as a unique manifestation of truth whose particularity cannot be surpassed" (Gadamer 1986: 37).

which is familiar to us—correctness in representation—stands and falls with truth as unconcealedness of beings. (Heidegger 1971: 50).

Traditionally art is a symbol, an allegory. “Allegory and symbol⁷ provide the conceptual frame within whose channel of vision the art work has for a long time been characterized” (Heidegger 1971: 20). When an understanding of art is mainly confined to its allegory and symbol dimension, it becomes difficult to encounter it as a happening of truth. Symbol and allegory are about conforming to something,⁸ usually understood in its unconcealment. Heidegger says; “With all our correct representations we would get nowhere” (Heidegger 1971: 51). “Heidegger claims that the shoes are not a symbol; they don’t point beyond themselves to something else. Instead, Van Gogh’s painting reveals to us the shoes themselves in their truth” (Dreyfus 2005: 409). Heidegger explains how happening of truth⁹ is different than a correct representation (Heidegger 1971: 54). The difference between an understanding of truth as representing or truth as happening constitute a deep difference of ontology that is embodied in his conceptualization of *Ereignis*. Thinking in terms of *Ereignis* (event) is a gift for our understanding art. When art is considered as a happening, works of art have a nature that is ongoing, accounting for the eventual nature of art. Heidegger explains the motion of the happening within the work as follows:

...we have indicated in the work rather a happening and in no sense a repose, for what is rest if not the opposite of motion? ... Only what is in motion can rest... Where rest includes motion, there can exist a repose which is an inner concentration of motion... Now the repose of the work that rests in itself is of this sort. We shall therefore come nearer to this repose if we can succeed in grasping the state of movement of the happening in work-being in its full unity. We ask: What relation do the setting up of a world and the setting forth of the earth exhibit in the work itself? (Heidegger 1971: 47).

A personal observation I would like to offer in this respect is about the happening of truth in Van Gogh’s paintings, from another dimension than the one emphasized by Heidegger in his elaborations of the peasant shoes. Van Gogh’s paintings are depicted

⁷ Gadamer develops his individual understanding of “symbol” in art, which is elaborated in this work.

⁸ According to Gadamer, there is an important difference between allegory and symbol. Gadamer’s understanding of symbol surpasses its representative character and calls for excess of meaning.

⁹ It is worth noting that according to Heidegger, science is not an original happening of truth but a cultivation of a domain of truth that is already opened. For him, when science gets beyond correctness and arrives at an essential disclosure; it is philosophy (Heidegger 1971: 60).

as if in movement, as if the things and strokes are trembling in relation to each other, rather than stable and with finish. This suggests a vision of happening. I think that sense of this trembling, this way of happening within his paintings are also reflected in the film *Loving Vincent*, in the trembling perception of the background throughout the film. Van Gogh's paintings also have a three dimensionality, as if emphasizing their thingliness, extending towards the surface of the canvas, that is contrary to the smooth finish of Renaissance and Classical paintings. As we watch his paintings closely, we can see how he paints his figures in their belonging together to each other and the background. This belonging together appears as if it is a movement. In this sense, I perceive his art as a plastic embodiment of *Ereignis* rendered visible through art.

Happening of truth is actually an understanding that surpasses plasticity, as it can also be discerned from Heidegger's discussions on thingliness and art's being more than this. But I think that Van Gogh's art, besides its other features, is also remarkable about how it displays such an happening within its plasticity. It is as if Van Gogh shows us how 'happening' might appear on a canvas, in a painting despite its rest in two dimensionality. Of course, this does not mean that works with invisible happenings are not happening. I am aware that happening is not a matter of sight, but I would like to argue that somehow Van Gogh made us also see his artistic version of happening before our eyes on a still thing. Van Gogh's words in his letter to Emile Bernard hints the nature of this happening that surpasses representation:

I follow no system of brushwork at all; I hit the canvas with irregular strokes which I leave as they are, impastos, uncovered spots of canvas — corners here and there left inevitably unfinished — reworkings, roughnesses; well, I'm inclined to think that the result is sufficiently worrying and annoying not to please people with preconceived ideas about technique (Van Gogh Museum 2025b).

According to Heidegger the self-opening of the world, the sheltering and concealing of the earth cause an essential strife for the happening of artwork, Heidegger explains happening of truth in terms of the counter play of world and earth. The setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth are two essential features in the work-being of the work. They belong together in the unity of work-being. This is the unity we seek when we ponder the self-subsistence of the work and try to express in words this closed, unitary repose of self-support (Heidegger 1971: 46-47). Since this is not a unity that is

analogous to a block, but a unity made of strife, there is a movement within it. This is the movement of happening.

Heidegger understands human being as being in the world, a space that assigns to persons and things their proper places. World is not the totality of beings, but it is the way in which beings appear. It is not chosen, but it is part of our inheritance with a historical significance. Heidegger's understanding of the earth is like the materiality of the artwork (Harries 2009: 112-115). For him earth is essentially self-secluding, "earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate into it" (Heidegger 1971: 46). According to the Dreyfus' interpretation, "world" has common ground with our conceptions of culture and scientific paradigm and "earth" is what resists the abstraction, and generalization of the paradigm. He argues that the artwork resists rationalization like the scientific paradigm (Dreyfus 2005: 411).

The world is the self-disclosing openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people. The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing. World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth, and the earth juts through the world. But the relation between world and earth does not wither away into the empty unity of opposites unconcerned with one another. (Heidegger 1971: 47). Heidegger related the saying of world and earth to poetry, the arena of conflict as the place of all nearness and remoteness of the gods (Heidegger 1971:71).

I see music, in many ways, as a defiance of physical laws—one of them is the relation to silence... That is the phenomenology of sound—the fact that sound is ephemeral, that sound has a very concrete relation to silence. I often compare it to the law of gravity; in the same way that objects are drawn to the ground, so are sounds drawn to silence, and vice versa (Barenboim and Said 2003: 30-32).

I discern some resonance between the above expression of Daniel Barenboim's phenomenology of music and Heidegger's strife between world and earth, where silence is like the earth, to which all sound gravitates and music is the world, like a Beethoven symphony in all its historic significance, as a destiny of people. Music happens onto this essential strife, which is also a belonging together, as reflected in the words of Said: "I find music fascinating in part because it encompasses silence, even though it is, of course, made of sound" (Barenboim and Said 2003: 23). Sound

and silence belong together like an essential strife in the music. I think that this explains the *Ereignis* of music, because there is both an essential conflict and a belonging together between sound and silence.

Heidegger cites Albrecht Dürer about the strife between earth and world in creation of the work: "For in truth, art lies hidden within nature; he who can wrest it from her, has it", to refer to the capacity for bringing forth what is in nature—that is, art (Heidegger 1971: 68). Van Gogh says: "It is looking at things for a long time that ripens you and gives you a deeper meaning" in a way to express how the opposition of clearing and concealing happens for him. Michelangelo says: "Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it." It is one way of taking the world out of earth, bringing the earth to world, disclosing earth by means of world; and setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth is happening of art through that strife. With Heidegger's insights, we can discern that every block of stone contains many statues of different worlds and the fact that they are many and yet to come embodies the art's eventual character of *Ereignis*.

In my view, art is also a making of truth by the tension and necessity of world's coming together with other worlds (still grounding from earth). Encounter with other worlds, brings possibilities to the existing strife of our world and earth. I think that Van Gogh's and Impressionists' encountering Japanese art and Picasso's and Matisse's encountering African Art are such examples, that enabled further worlds and further happening of earth's potentials. In such cases of encounters "world" (the traditional relevance of the art work) is actually withdrawn from the work in its authentic form but the work is still it is pregnant with further shining of truth in art.

According to Heidegger, art is the historical happening of truth. Heidegger says: "whenever art happens – that is, whenever there is a beginning – a thrust enters history, history either begins or starts over again" (Heidegger 1971: 74). I think that by emphasizing the historical dimension, Heidegger also points to the Dasein's temporality and being in the world. As art is a happening of and for Dasein in the strife of world and earth, it is also an event in time. I understand that world is the mainly historic phenomenon in happening of the art. While writing about the Greek temple Heidegger states "The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the

world of this historical people” (Heidegger 1971: 41), implying the historical significance of the world. I think that earth also has a temporal dimension even though it is different from history. Earth’s temporality, when combined with Dasein’s, becomes historic and the strife between world and earth happens in art. Heidegger calls art itself a riddle and rather than claiming to solve the riddle, he says that the “the task is to see the riddle” (Heidegger 1971: 77).

For Heidegger the happening of art is also related to the “essential decisions in the destiny of an historical people” (Heidegger 1971: 47). Heidegger draws attention to the historic fate and how the beginnings prepare themselves in time and inconspicuously. I understand that history is anchored in the strife of world and earth and its unique temporality, which sometimes appears as necessity. “What makes art great is not only and not in the first place the high quality of what is created. Rather, art is great because it is [an answer to] an absolute need” (Heidegger, Cited in Young 2001: 11). According to me the absolute necessities that are answered by art account for the truth of art. When overcoming one way of seeing, becomes a necessity a new way of seeing emerges out of a necessity. The development of Cubism as a major step to overcome linear perspective can be given as an example of answering such a need. Cubism opens up a new possibility of seeing. This issue is elaborated in section 4.3.

Heidegger relates art and truth to shining: he describes art as “the shining of truth” and beauty as “the way artworks shine”, and he calls this shining beautiful (Dreyfus 2005: 413). In my final remark I would like to emphasize how Heidegger perceives happening of truth in art as a shining. I understand that for him *Ereignis* is an event of shining.

3.2. Gadamer’s Understanding of Art

Gadamer’s thinking on art can be regarded as a continuation of Heidegger’s thinking. This unique way of continuation in thinking has its peculiar relevance to Heidegger’s, which is not a mere replication in the form of a multiplication. In his establishment as a distinct philosopher, Gadamer has his divergences from Heidegger¹⁰ and he also

¹⁰ Gadamer follows “Heidegger’s turn to language with the centrality of language and linguisticality (*Sprachlichkeit*). However, he develops these notions in his original way which

brings his unique insight and conceptualization to understanding art. However, they both share a common ground, and it is evident that Heidegger has a remarkable influence on his pupil, Gadamer. They both have the same ontological understanding of art as an event of truth. They are both against the aesthetic understanding of art, which is based on a subject's sensual appreciation of an object. According to them art is an open-ended event of truth, which cannot be explained as representation or on merely subjective terms of appreciation or pleasure. In my opinion, in his appropriation of Heideggerian thinking, Gadamer develops his own way of *Ereignis* in explaining what art is and how it is understood. In doing this, he also utilizes the western metaphysical tradition that Heidegger tries to discard.

I understand that there are various attitudes in the adoption of the term “aesthetics” in Gadamer's thinking. On the one hand, “aesthetic consciousness” and “aesthetic differentiation” are regarded as limitations for the happening of art in its totality as truth, on the other hand there is a discourse on “hermeneutic aesthetics” which covers the art experience in its totality as event, even though the term has mainly been used by scholars such as Davey, Nielsen, Marino, rather than Gadamer himself. Within Gadamer's texts aesthetics can be understood as both philosophy of art and philosophy of perception as it is suggested from its etymological origin from the Greek term *aesthesis* (Marino 2025: 52). Despite various ambiguities about the way the word aesthetics is used in various contexts, there is one thing that is clear and resonating throughout Gadamer's thinking; it is how understanding becomes an event in understanding art and the fact that this is an event of truth. In this sense aesthetics feeds into hermeneutics as reflected in Gadamer's famous saying: “[a]esthetics has to be absorbed into hermeneutics” (Gadamer 1989: 164).

In his discussions on aesthetics, Gadamer explains how after Kant and the *radicalization* of Kant by Schiller, art has started to be understood as a contrast to reality. According to Gadamer, Kant has subjectivized aesthetics by relating it to the subjective feeling of disinterested pleasure,¹¹ and Schiller regarded art in its own self-

is different from the Heideggerian jargon and, arguably with significant departures from Heidegger's thought” (Dostal 2002: 2).

¹¹ Disinterested pleasure is subjective appreciation of a work's merely formal qualities.

consciousness against the real. In this line of thinking, the art of the beautiful had started to appear as an alternative to practical reality, rather than complementing it. Art has mainly become an appearance that is detached from reality. “But if the concept of art is defined as appearance in contrast to reality... [a]rt becomes a standpoint of its own and establishes its own autonomous claim to supremacy” (Gadamer 1989: 75). When art is understood as an opposition to the real as merely an escape from the real, it loses its contact with the real, which means a loss of its power to transform. This attitude implies the detachment of art from truth. This is what Gadamer detests, in the same sense Heidegger does. For Gadamer, art is intrinsically related to truth. Relating art mainly to ideas such as imitation, appearance, unreality, illusion, magic and dream contribute to its understanding as something other than reality. Gadamer wants to change this and make a phenomenological return from experiencing art as a sensual pleasure, something out of the real or as a break from the real to experiencing (*Erfahrung*) art as a genuine truth.

German has two separate words for “experience”: *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*... *Erlebnis* is something you have, and thus is connected with a subject and with the subjectivization of aesthetics. *Erfahrung* is something you undergo, so that subjectivity is overcome, and drawn into an “event” (*Geschehen*), of meaning. Gadamer typically uses the term *Erlebnis* with a critical overtone, and the term *Erfahrung* with a positive one (Weinsheimer and Marshall 1989: xii-xiii).

Gadamer thinks that the aesthetic understanding of art emphasizes appearance in a way that disregards the truth of art. “If the aesthetic were mere appearance in this sense, then its force—like the terror of dreams—could last only as long as there was no doubt about its reality, and it would lose its truth on waking” (Gadamer 1989: 75). For Gadamer, art is more than its aesthetic conceptualization. With Heidegger, Gadamer brings an ontological shift to aesthetics.

According to Gadamer, “aesthetic consciousness” has a similar connotation to “beautiful appearance” in the sense that it also implies a contrast to reality and an alienation from reality, that comes by distancing from the particularity. Aesthetic consciousness, which is particularly the mode of Romantic aesthetics, entails a process of abstraction, dissociating the work from its world. This way of experiencing art belongs to what Gadamer calls *Erlebnis*. “By disregarding everything in which a work is rooted (its original context of life, and the religious or secular function that gave it significance), it becomes visible as the ‘pure work of art’” (Gadamer 1989: 77).

Aesthetic consciousness assumes that there is a pure realm for relating with the world specifically aesthetically mainly through senses and sentiments. Gadamer does not agree that there is such an aesthetic realm of pure sensations, because artworks are not only bearers of pleasure or other sensation; they have something to say and they make a claim to truth (Lawn and Keane 2011: 8). For Gadamer, the work of art is not pure because it is interested in life, and it is an event in each of its particularity. It is an event that is part of life. For this reason, subjects and objects do not rest in their detachment as isolated entities but participate in their attachment, in a life changing manner.

The Romantic perspective [to aesthetics] is untenable because it defines the aesthetic on the basis of a subject that is presumed to precede it. Instead, the aesthetic should be conceived of as a moment in the constitution of the subject. Presupposing a subject and then building a concept of the aesthetic upon it thus fails to do justice to the aesthetic. Developing an adequate grasp of the relevance of the aesthetic necessitates a more dynamic conception of subjectivity that acknowledges its formation through social structures and practices (Bertram 2025: 99).

In his discussion of the theoretical difficulties of the concept of aesthetics, Gadamer refers to Aristotle for “[h]e showed that all aesthesis tends toward a universal”, which leads to abstraction. This means that we take our sensory perceptions as perceptions of something in their relation to something universal and our understanding remains as “an understanding of something as something” (Gadamer 1989: 82-83). Giving primacy to perception is also criticized by Heidegger, as also reflected in his avoidance of aesthetic attitude within his thinking. Gadamer argues that “[p]ure seeing and pure hearing are dogmatic abstractions that artificially reduce phenomena. Perception always includes meaning” (Gadamer 1989: 84). When perception includes meaning, it is implied that the meaning is already possessed, therefore there is no claim for further understanding or a need for an effort of hermeneutical philosophy. Such a perception is given in its immediacy without its historical dimension. This is the kind of experience that is meant by *Erlebnis*. It lacks both the claim for truth and an event of understanding, as part of existential self-understanding. It is part of the aesthetic consciousness, and it poses the danger of silencing the question of truth, which is a crucial aspect of art. Gadamer wants thinking on art to involve the experience (*Erfahrung*) of art with a historical consciousness to make it an event of truth. *Erfahrung* is an event of participation it is not a subject’s standing over against an object in a manner of perception. *Erfahrung* happens with participation in the world. “Hence

aesthetics becomes a history of worldviews—i.e., a history of truth, as it is manifested in the mirror of art” (Gadamer 1989: 89). Art is within history and part of the world views.

Aesthetic differentiation is an extension of aesthetic consciousness which separates the form and the content of an art work. Aesthetic differentiation also separates the work from its original ceremonial, religious or political context. According to Gadamer, context of the work is included in its meaning (Lawn and Keane 2011: 9). Aesthetic differentiation aims to arrive at the pure artwork. Pure artwork is the work without any religious, social cultural or ethical elements but only in its aesthetic significance. It is what remains of the work when all the elements that belong to the work for its being situated in a world is subtracted from it. Gadamer also relates building specific sites for art such as museums, theaters concert halls and so on to the aesthetic differentiation prevalent within the society, because the work loses its place and its world in such sites. “[A]esthetic consciousness must then de-world the artwork and select only the aesthetic qualities of the work in order to lay bare the pure, untainted work of art” (Nielsen 2023: 25). For example, when we look at an African mask and see only its formal qualities without understanding or considering its social significance, its ritual power, we are in an act of aesthetic differentiation due to our aesthetic consciousness. Gadamer writes,

...aesthetic differentiation is an abstraction that selects only on the basis of aesthetic quality as such... It abstracts from all the conditions of a work’s accessibility. Thus this is a specifically aesthetic kind of differentiation. It distinguishes the aesthetic quality of a work from all the elements of content that induce us to take up a moral or religious stance towards it, and presents it solely by itself in its aesthetic being... The sovereignty of aesthetic consciousness consists in its capacity to make this aesthetic differentiation everywhere and to see everything “aesthetically.” (Gadamer 1989: 78).

In order to overcome this, Gadamer argues for what he calls “aesthetic non-differentiation”, which is similar to his preference for *Erfahrung* over *Erlebnis*, because for him art experience is a participatory event which is inseparable to form and content in its totality with historic and ethical dimensions. *Erfahrung* involves the potential of transforming life (Nielsen 2023:6). *Erfahrung* is not disinterested to life, it is a genuine experience of understanding art that causes a change in the subject. This strong interrelation is like a belonging together; “understanding belongs to the encounter with the work of art itself, and so this belonging can be illuminated only on

the basis of the mode of being of the work of art itself” (Gadamer 1989: 91). However, in aesthetic differentiation, the work appears as a static object to be analyzed by a subject. This attitude does not bring forth the hermeneutic movement that makes art encounter an event. With a similar insight Edward Said says:

...there’s no point in writing material that makes people just feel good. And I’ve always been very interested not so much in making people comfortable but in making them uncomfortable... in the end, there are certain clichés that you want to dismantle (Barenboim and Said 2003: 78).

Gadamer relates aesthetics and hermeneutics, which has mostly been concerned with epistemological problems, also bringing an ontological depth to both. Gadamer famously claims that “[a]esthetics has to be absorbed into hermeneutics” (Gadamer 1989: 164). Gadamer’s hermeneutical aesthetics rejects the separation of art and life. Gadamer’s approach to art emphasizes artwork’s integrity and autonomy including its extra-aesthetic (moral, political, or religious) aspects in its ongoing, open-ended dimension. Accordingly, artworks are always pregnant with the emergence of new meanings that are not confined its formal elements and their events are ongoing with all acts of understanding as part of life-worlds. In its relevance to life, it is also crucial to note that hermeneutics is a practical philosophy for Gadamer.

In relating art and life within his hermeneutic attitude to aesthetics, Gadamer develops his thinking mainly around three concepts, which are among his unique contributions. They are play, symbol and festival. It can be argued that understanding art with the lens of these concepts cure the detachment that is caused by “aesthetic differentiation”.

In play, symbol and festival there is an element of sharing, communication and commonality which embody its truth. This can also be related to why art event is not a subjective experience. As Gadamer articulates a hermeneutical reflection on art and aesthetic experience that gravitates around these concepts, he connects his thinking with a rich anthropological background (Marino 2025: 50), which is in movement in art, in the lasting event of art and its lasting event of understanding.

3.2.1 Play

Gadamer builds his philosophical vocabulary for art with the concepts of play, festival and symbol in line with his effort to understand the coexistence of past and future in

his attitude to “discover what is common even in what is different” (Gadamer 1986: 11-12). In his search for “the unity that binds together the classical artistic tradition and modern art” (Gadamer 1986: 22) play, symbol and festival become recurring themes of his work. In a way to substantiate his effort, Gadamer writes:

...it is necessary... to go beyond the self-evident character of the dominant concept of art and lay bare the anthropological foundation upon which the phenomenon of art rests and from the perspective of which we must work out a new legitimation for art (Gadamer 1986: 5).

According to Gadamer, play is the mode of being of the work of art. Play implies an event of art that has to be understood beyond subjectivity, without being confined to the creator or those who are enjoying the art work. Play indicates the dynamic ontology of the art in its autonomous structure. “[P]lay has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play” (Gadamer 1989: 108). The play has primacy over the players. For Gadamer, “all playing is a being-played... [and] the game masters the players” (Gadamer 1989: 111). The important thing about play is not players or spectators, but what takes place ‘in between’. The play is different from the subjective behavior of each. Even though the play is comprised of players and spectators, it has its own autonomy, its ideality¹², that is due to its being intended and understood as play. Play is the event of a closed world. Audience is an essential part of the play that completes (closes) the world with its imagination (Arthos 2013: 7).

The play is a whole experience, a closed world, because of the active participation of the audience in making sense of what is presented. The performative event is actually the bringing together of two estranged or not yet familiar halves, the production of the play by the actors and its witnessing by a new audience. That fusion is what closes the circle of meaning and makes the “play” whole (Arthos 2013: 7).

Play is a serious event. Even though the player knows that play exists in a world that is out of the concerns of the purposive world, it does not lack seriousness. It is serious in its own way, which actually enables the mode of being of the play. Because the play makes sense as the play when the players seriously lose themselves in the play. Besides this, there is play in the many human activities and rituals including the most serious ones such as the administrative or judicial ceremonies and practices. “Play and

¹² Ideality is spatio-temporal independence. According to Gadamer something ideal is “detachable” from the particular, enabling its shareability across contexts (Da Via and Lynch 2024: 47)

seriousness seem to be interwoven in a still deeper sense. It is immediately apparent that any form of serious activity is shadowed by the possibility of playful behavior” (Gadamer 1986: 124). Referring to Nietzsche’s insight about the seriousness of a child in play, which is in no contradiction to its divine ease, Gadamer claims, “those who have looked deeply into human nature have recognized that our capacity for play is an expression of the highest seriousness” (Gadamer 1986: 130).

Plays happen in transformed worlds and plays can transform. Such a transformation is different from alteration, which is mainly about a change in quality, while with transformation something becomes something else. There is an element of transformation about the play in the sense that the play takes place in another world that is discontinuous with this world. It has its own closed world and its own measure (Gadamer 1989: 107-116). However, there is more in the relation of transformation and play from the point of art. It is important to note that while play is a mode of being for art, not all play is art. Play becomes art when it is transformed into a structure (*Verwandlung ins Gebilde*), which indicates its ideality and implies the unity that brings parts together into a single whole. “So, just as art’s character as play implies that it is an event, its character as *Gebilde* implies that it is ideal. The unified phenomenological structure of an ideal event shows itself in art as the unity of play and *Gebilde*” (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 51). Play as structure is different from other plays also in the sense that it addresses the spectator; it makes a claim, while children’s plays do not make such claims. They do not address an audience and they are not *Gebilde*. And Gadamer will show us that this transformation to a structure, this ideality in *Gebilde* has its truth and it is truth, as part of his main argument about the truth of art.:

Grondin’s elaboration of Gadamer’s understanding of play emphasizes its difference from Schiller’s understanding of play, which leads to the problem of modern aesthetics. Accordingly, in Schiller’s play, the subject is involved with himself in the play that provides a freedom from the rules of knowing and acting. However, in the play of art, Gadamer’s subjects are neither by themselves, nor without theoretical or practical concerns; they are rather interwoven into an event which is experienced as a more excellent reality (2001: 43-44). “This play is thus not to be thought of as... a subjective playing with the work, but rather as the playing of the work with us”

(Grondin 2001: 44). This statement places emphasis on the “playing along” character of the play which indicates an active event of participation rather than being a passive subject to an entertainment. In other words, we do not watch the play as if it were a foreign and merely aesthetic phenomenon; we are rather drawn into it as players. “The play of art does not lie in the artwork that stands in front of us, but lies in the fact that one is touched by a proposition, an address, an experience , which so captures us that we can only play along” (Grondin 2001: 45).

When the metaphorical senses of the word “play” is examined, “the play of light, the play of the waves, the play of gears or parts of machinery, the interplay of limbs, the play of forces, the play of gnats, even a play on words” can be observed. What is common to all is the to-and-fro movement without a goal and in constant repetition, which is indifferent to who, or what performs it. The important thing is the occurrence of the movement. This is actually very close to the occurrence within nature or being animal that we can only consider human in its resemblance to nature or animals that human too plays. Since play is a prevailing phenomenon of the animal world, it is the human who shares this aspect with the other animals. In other words, we cannot say “water and light, and animals play as well”, we should rather say “humans play too” (Gadamer 1989: 109). However, still there are differences; it is generally peculiar to the human that human plays ‘something’. Human play is constituted by rules and regulations that are effective within the closed world of play. While animal play can slip into other animal behaviors, there is a directedness of human’s play, which accounts for the intentionality of consciousness (Gadamer 1986: 124).

Gadamer’s search for an understanding of animal and human play and the borderline of transition between them, takes him to thinking on art, because of the dimension that is over and above the necessary and purposive within play. This opens the way for new possibilities. He is particularly astonished about the suggestion of freedom, the element of free variability enabled by play; he says, “[art] begins precisely there, where we are able to do otherwise... it is something that has emerged in an unrepeatable way and has manifested itself in a unique fashion” (Gadamer 1986: 125-126). It is agreeable to the most that there is a play-like character of art. Relating art and play is not a new tendency. Kant’s characterization of art as the disinterested, non-purposive delight in the beautiful is also related to the free play (Gadamer 1986: 127).

The classical theory of art is based on the idea of mimesis, which is imitation, the representation of the divine. There is mimesis in the play of art, but it is with a cognitive import that frees it from being a mere representation. An imitating person does more than just replicating, “he allows what he knows to exist and to exist in the way that he knows it” (Gadamer 1989: 117). Imitation is showing more of the reality. In this sense, it is not representation but presentation. In a similar line of argumentation, according to Gadamer, the joy we feel due to recognition is not the joy of sensing exactly the same as what we already know of what we recognize, but coming to know more than what was familiar. “As recognized, it is grasped in its essence, detached from its accidental aspects. This applies especially to the kind of recognition that takes place in a play” (Gadamer 1989: 118). Such an understanding of presentation characterizes the mode of being of the work of art. According to Gadamer, art is an event of being that occurs in presentation as play. Presentation calls for participation. According to Gadamer, presentation of a work is part of the being of the art work and this is valid for both transitory art, like drama or musical performance which demand performance in the literal sense and static art such as painting which calls for a participation to its presenting itself.

The performative enactment of an artwork always involves the interplay between the work and those actively engaging the work, which includes both the literal players or performers (for instance, the musicians or actors/actresses) and the spectators and audience members who enact the artwork through attentive listening and/or “reading” and synthesizing a work’s various parts in order to understand its meaning (Nielsen 2023:127).

Play of art has a communicative aspect that is characterized by an event of participation as “everyone involved in play is a participant” (Gadamer 1986: 28). Play calls for participation that is more than merely on-looking. Gadamer argues for the ontological dignity of play that binds art and life. Play is part of nature and life, with a dimension of freedom that makes for art, “forms of play are forms of our freedom” (Gadamer 1986: 130). Play is not something that is done outside life. Play in art is a serious event that pervades many dimensions of life and is transformed into an ideality that explains why it is not causal. Play in art has a hermeneutic identity.

What makes this hermeneutic identity? Obviously, this further formulation means that its identity consists precisely in there being something to “understand,” that is to be understood in what it “says” or “intends.” The work issues a challenge which expects to be met. It requires an answer – an answer that can only be given by someone who

accepted the challenge. And the answer must be his own and given actively. The participant belongs to the play (Gadamer 1986: 26).

Both play and art are ends in themselves. Interpreting art's mode of being as play contributes to its understanding as event because of the movement character that is emphasized. Art as play emphasizes art's event function as participation, that is more important than the participants. Art as play has its own non-purposive rationality. Being non-purposive, gives art its freedom, having a rationality accounts for its ideality.

Here it becomes clear why starting from the concept of play is methodologically advantageous. The work of art cannot simply be isolated from the "contingency" of the chance conditions in which it appears, and where this kind of isolation occurs, the result is an abstraction that reduces the actual being of the work (Gadamer 1986: 120).

Plays are open ended "no one knows how a game will end and no one knows to what end an artwork works" (Davey 2013: 49). Works of art are events of play because of the element of contingency that can never be isolated and that defies isolation in the sense of an abstraction. An abstracted understanding of art that is cleaned of all the contingencies that surround and actually make it up would be less of an event, as it would be possible to handle it in its totality. However, this is not the case. Art happens anew in its each happening, every time it is played, in each presentation. Barenboim says: "A performance has only one possibility... even if it is repeated the next day, it is a different performance" (Barenboim and Said 2003: 8-29). Art is in the mode of play because it bears a happening that is pregnant with possibilities to come.

Considering the ontology of art as play is a thinking that also enables an escape from explaining art on the basis of a subject object relation, as it is suggested by disciplinary aesthetics. "Indeed, the virtue of the model of play is that it emancipates the work of art... from universal concepts and art-historical periods" (Bruns 2006: 36). Art as play suggests the fusion of the play and the audience. The audience is not detached to the play or it does not have a fixed distance to the play. It is within the play due to the participatory nature of an event.

3.2.2. Festival

Gadamer continues his conceptualization of art as "play" with his introduction of the concept of festival. Arguing that work of art is play, makes emphasis on the unity of

the work of art in its totality with all its presentations. Work of art is not a single abstraction detached from its presentations. It is dependent on self-presentation that belongs to what it is. Even the transformed and distorted presentations belong to the structure of the work. There is no single original that the repetitions address themselves, every repetition of the work is original. This indicates the particular temporality of the artwork that happens in each presentation. Gadamer relates the temporality of art to “festival”. He writes, “[w]e are familiar with this kind of highly puzzling temporal structure from festivals... the festival that comes round again is neither another festival nor a mere remembrance of the one that was originally celebrated (Gadamer 1986: 126).

With its unique temporality, festival becomes a multidimensional apparatus for Gadamer in his elaboration of art. A festival is an experience of community, commonality and sharing as a celebration for everyone. In this sense it is different than work which separates people as division of labor. Festive celebrations gather people together.

If there is one thing that pertains to all festive experiences, then it is surely the fact that they allow no separation between one person and another. A festival is an experience of community and represents community in its most perfect form. A festival is meant for everyone (Gadamer 1986: 39).

Gadamer emphasizes that festivals are celebrated and claims that celebrating is an art. “It is no accident that this experience resembles that of art, since celebration has its own specific kinds of representation” (Gadamer 1986: 40). Festivals are made with the intention of celebrating something, even if it is not always straightforward. In this sense, it can be argued that its meaning extends beyond itself. Gadamer observes that festive celebrations of earlier and more primitive cultures were actually superior. Since then, within festivals there is both an element of festival address and an all embracing “quiet”, that are both means of communication. “Such quiet communicates itself, for example, when someone chances to encounter a great artistic or religious monument that suddenly strikes him very deeply” (Gadamer 1986: 40). Festivals are events of sharing of the encounter and the intention in a communal way. In this sense they resemble our art experience, like that quiet awe shared by the community in their entrance to the Sistine Chapel.

Gadamer thinks that the temporal dimension of the festival resembles the temporality of the work of art, which is different from the abstract calculation of temporal duration of the work time. Gadamer puts emphasis on the meaning of “enacting” that we use while we are referring to the events of a festival. It can be argued that, as we enact a festival, we also perform a musical composition every time we perform it within the unity of the work, which Gadamer also calls its “ideality”.

To enact is not to set out in order subsequently to arrive somewhere, for when we enact a festival, then the festival is always there from the beginning... The temporal character of the festive celebration that we enact lies in the fact that it does not dissolve into a series of separate moments (Gadamer 1986: 40).

Time of festival or art is different from the normal experience of time which is divisible and at our disposal to be filled with a content. This pragmatic time is defined as “time for something” or “empty time” and it is to be spent rather than experienced. However, art has its autonomous time, which is “fulfilled”, rather than a filled empty time. “We do not calculate [autonomous time], nor do we simply add up a gradual sequence of empty moments to arrive at a totality of time” (Gadamer 1989: 42). Autonomous time brings calculating time to a standstill.

As we saw, it is an intrinsic characteristic of every festival that it enjoys a specific, rhythmical recurrence that elevates it "above the flow of time. In a kind of cosmic rhythm, it assures that not all times pass by indifferently in the same homogeneous way (Gadamer 1986e: 60).

Work of art has its own temporal structure like a living organism, it has its “organic unity”. Gadamer thinks that this is like the “purposiveness without purpose” as described by Kant, and it is valid both for the organisms and works of art. There is a living unity of the work that makes it resemble a living organism. They both have their autonomous temporality that is related to their internally structured unity. As an organism has its autonomous time, in its experiences of youth, maturity, and old age, the art work has also its unique way of temporal structure outside the quantifiable duration of time. “One has to discover the autonomous time proper to a piece of music, the autonomous time proper to a poetic text” (Gadamer 1986: 44). This autonomous time brings past and present together in numerous possible ways within an elevated presence. “Enactment is the festival’s mode of being, and in the enactment, time becomes the *nunc stans* of an elevated presence in which past and present become one in the act of remembrance” (Gadamer 1986e: 459). In fact, it may be argued there is

something that reminds us the spirit of “tradition” in festivals, as they bring us closer to and make us participate in something past in the present time.

Similar insight is also conveyed by Edward Said, with only the difference that he does not refer to it as a festival. Said explains how he witnesses a new concept of time at the concerts that is different from the time of duty, together with other people. He says, “[h]ere, all of a sudden, time was transformed into all the possibilities of organized musical sound and a beautiful plasticity, which I’d never before experienced in quite that way and with such a large number of people all at once” (Barenboim and Said 2003: 17). Furthermore, he takes a taste from the actuality of such a performance as he says, “there’s something rare about it because of its evanescence. It happens and it’s over, and then you have to carry it around in your mind” (*ibid.*). Said’s interpretation of an experience of concert, seems to be in line with the Gadamerian conception of art as festival, in the sense of its unique temporality, which is a shared and elevated presence out of the routine of time, with its ties to both past and present. This time is carried in the mind afterwards like a remembrance.

This unique temporality also has an element of participation from the audience, as tarrying in the mood of attunement. Gadamer also gives the example of musical compositions to explicate this aspect of the “autonomous temporality” of an artwork. Despite the tempo markers on the scores that are put by the composers to instruct the performers, the correct tempo can never really be quantified or calculated. The engaged listeners, who are attuned to the work and who tarry with it, must find the right time for the unfolding of the work. As people are absorbed in a work, they forget about time and time starts to stand like a “*nunc stans*” as a result of a particular mood of attunement and lingering with the work. (Nielsen 2023: 65). I think that entering into the autonomous temporality of an artwork that is different than the temporality outside, is both a task and a reward of the tarrying. It demands a genuine encounter.

Gadamer says that festivals are celebrated but he does not confine festive character to joy or happiness, he elaborates on the festive character of mourning as well, in the sense that he points out that the participants are raised out of their everyday existence and elevated into a kind of universal communion. It is a self-fulfilling moment. For Gadamer, the “vital essence festive of celebration is creation and elevation into a

transformed state of being” (Gadamer 1986e: 59). For whatever reason festivals enable a divergence from everyday life in a communal manner and they allow a shared increase in being.

The unique temporality of the artwork is one reason for experiencing a multiplicity of events within the unity of the works. This complex understanding of the time of the work contributes to the nature of the artworks as events as they are never static but always in a manner of happening.

3.2.3 Symbol

Symbol is one of the terms used by Gadamer in his elaboration of art in his effort to highlight the open-ended nature of understanding art within its continuity. In fact, appealing to a concept like “symbol” to argue for the event of meaning might appear counter-intuitive, but Gadamer makes us understand how symbol contributes to the event of meaning in art, by first emphasizing its distinction from “allegory”, then by diligently explaining how it causes an increasing in the being and meaning of the work.

Gadamer prevents falling into the reductionist danger of taking symbol as part of an already defined and limited relation by drawing the distinction between allegory and symbol. Symbol is a matter of fragmentation not a one-to-one correspondence as it is implied by allegory. Fragmentation poses complexity and the possibility for interpretation opens up. Our experience of art, any encounter with art is open to a variety of interpretation. “The symbolic does not simply point toward a meaning, but rather allows that meaning to present itself” (Gadamer 1986: 31-34).

“Symbol” comes from Greek token of remembrance, revealing its relation to recognition. Symbol is different than allegory in the sense that it implies that the reference is known in advance; whereas in the symbol “the particular represents itself as a fragment of being that promises to complete and make whole whatever corresponds to it” (Gadamer 1986: 32); making also suggestions for our fragmentary life which is never complete but always open to further interpretation or understanding. Gadamer explains the culture behind the symbol in Greek tradition as follows:

The host presented his guest with the so-called *tessera hospitalis* by breaking some object in two. He kept one half for himself and gave the other half to his guest. If in

thirty or fifty years time, a descendant of the guest should ever enter his house, the two pieces could be fitted together again to form a whole in an act of recognition. In its original technical sense, the symbol represented something like a sort of pass used in the ancient world: something in and through which we recognize some-one already known to us (Gadamer 1986: 31).

According to Gadamer, recognition is not seeing something for the second time. This idea makes sense, as we come to realize that we do not actually *recognize* what we see repeatedly, or the things that we always see as themselves. There is something active, something going on within re-cognition which makes it an event of cognition with its open-ended implications. “Recognition always implies that we have come to know something more authentically than we were able to do when caught up in our first encounter with it” (Gadamer 1986: 47). This more authentic knowing is about eliciting “the permanent from the transient” (*ibid.*) and this is the way art makes us recognize, reminding us also the “ideality” of a work as argued by Gadamer. He considers recognition as an opportunity. According to Gadamer our age is not as symbolic as before since we do not share rich symbolic traditions as before, and he wants us to be enriched by this opportunity, the possibilities provided by the symbol.

The favorable opportunities of the past and the unfavorable opportunities of the present are not simply facts to be accepted. In fact, recognition of the symbolic is a task that we must take upon ourselves. We have to actualize the possibilities of recognition in the admittedly vast field that confronts us here (Gadamer 1986: 47-48).

The symbol is about how something is known and recognized. “In every expression of art, something is revealed, is known, is recognized. There is always a disturbing quality to this recognition, an amazement amounting almost to horror, that such things can befall human beings...” (Gadamer 1986d:153). Recognition is important also for the reason that it touches life and it refers to the shared element of life. Recognition is a very lively aspect of symbol, and life is a crucial aspect of Gadamer’s understanding of art. By displaying that art is not disinterested, as it was suggested by Kant, Gadamer highlights art’s interest in life, as part of his main argument to relate art to the event of truth. In this sense, recognition is an element of life, for it is both what we know of life and what life becomes with recognition. Recognition expands life by expanding the ways or realms we are at home. “The recognition that the work of art procures for us is always an expansion of that infinite process of making ourselves at home in the world which is the human lot” (Gadamer 1986d: 151).

Gadamer elaborates on the renunciation of the symbolic, in line with the contemporary art's mistrust of traditional forms of expression. He emphasizes that contemporary art does not rely on a unified symbolic language since Baroque. It is crucial to note that renunciation of symbol is not equal to renunciation of meaning in modern art as he is assured that "there is indeed a meaning in all the forms of modern art we see around us, but it is a meaning that cannot be unlocked" (Gadamer 1986b: 75). The meaning of modern art is different from the symbol laden art of the before, like the meaning in absolute music, which is without any symbolic reference. Despite the disregard of the symbol, Gadamer questions if there is any relevance of symbol in the contemporary art, as part of his effort to find the continuity between past and present.

A symbol is something that facilitates recognition, and the dearth of symbol is a characteristic feature of the historical moment in which we find ourselves. It reflects the growing unfamiliarity and impersonality of the world about us. Recognition is the essence of all symbolic language, and all art of whatever kind will always be a language of recognition. Even the art of our own time, whose mute gaze presents us with such disturbing enigmas, remains a kind of recognition: in such art we encounter the undecipherability of our surroundings (Gadamer 1986b:74).

In my opinion, Gadamer argues for the continuation of the symbolic in the modern art, but he makes this argumentation in a rather subtle way. He characterizes art of our time with a mute gaze and a speechless silence, because the gaze at the art of the previous times was already voiced with the meaning of the symbol or its narrative value. Asserting that the gaze towards art is mute in our age is emphasizing that it is an encounter, an event, because it does not depend on the already constructed ways of meaning. However, it is not totally out of the symbolic. Even the disturbing enigmas of this open-ended encounter is related to recognition. It might be argued that it is related to recognition in various ways. One of the ways of this relation is the recognition of our previous encounters of the undecipherability. In other words, we recognize modern art as modern art in its speechlessness.

This speechlessness is not lack of meaning. It is meaning not formed by speech, yet still belonging to the world of speech and symbols that it comes from, in my own interpretation. It is the speechlessness within this possibility of speech and despite the

possibility of speech. A *Blue* painting by Yves Klein¹³ might be speechless in some way, but still it cannot escape speech totally, for it is anchored in a tradition of paintings that speak. In its silent polyphony we see the Renaissance passion for lapis lazuli as a shared trait, but also we see more in an endless variety, because the painting also speaks its speechlessness. Its very silence speaks the possibility of speech. As every new art, it is onto what was past art, even if it is in the form of denial or negation. I think even its modern silence whispers some Renaissance.

While symbols are a prevalent source of Asaf Hâlet Çelebi's (1907-1958) poetry, I think that his attitude to symbols provide a solid example for understanding how they bring resonations of meaning and how they are different from allegory. In his poem *Sidharta*, Çelebi employs the refrain "Om Mani Padme Hum", a Sanskrit mantra, six times; in this sense it becomes a symbol for creating atmosphere in the metaphorical structure of the poem. In his writings that explain his poetic attitude, Çelebi puts it explicitly that it is not needed to search for the meanings of the words in his poems (Çelebi 2004)¹⁴, as such foreign sayings are frequent in his work. However, this does not mean that their meanings are irrelevant, on the contrary they are highly relevant, as the literary meaning of "Om Mani Padme Hum" is "praise to the jewel in the lotus" which works as a gateway to the "innermost heart" of all Buddhist teachings; deeply intensifying the depth of the poem, besides the resonation of the sound it conveys. However, by saying that the meaning is not needed to be searched, Çelebi makes a Gadamerian emphasis about the meaning of symbol. A symbol is not what it says, it is not an allegory with a pre-defined content, that it is to be looked up in dictionaries. It is what it brings to mind, what it calls for from the yet undiscovered. "Om Mani Padme Hum" points towards another tradition with its loads of meaning to come and horizon. Symbol takes us across traditions, and it makes this with its force that surpasses the literal. We do not decipher symbols, we participate in the events of symbol, which is open ended.

¹³ Yves Klein (1928-1962) had painted monochromes mostly known for his patented International Klein Blue (IKB). Even though it is emphasized that IKB is not lapis lazuli, there is enough similarity between the two colors to make such a claim relevant.

¹⁴ This remark is originally made in "Benim Gözümle Şiir Davası 1", written by Çelebi in 1954.

Gadamer relates symbol in art to the interplay of showing and concealing; enabling us to perceive the Heideggerian ontological plenitude or the truth (Gadamer 1986: 34). there is always excess of meaning in a work, that can never be completed in an interpretation. Barenboim also claims that all interpretations are necessarily lacking in something (Barenboim and Said 2003: 140). There is always this possibility of something additional about art that can shake us. This is in line with the essence of the symbolic, which is not referring to an ultimate meaning.

In my view, symbol does not set limits to interpretation but it establishes a cultural background for interpretation. Symbol suggests a vocabulary for interpretation. It shows a direction which bears a cultural richness, a background. In this sense it is an enrichment to interpretation and art, however, it can also be asked whether or to what degree it discourages interpretation towards new and not yet opened realms.

Gadamer asks if Goethe was right in his regard of the symbol as a fundamental concept of aesthetics and making the claims “everything points to everything else” and “everything is a symbol”. Gadamer elaborates about the two different senses of interpretation: pointing to something and pointing out the meaning of something. For him there is both the sign character of things and what conceals itself. Therefore, interpreting is not the reading of the meaning that is already formulated, but reading the ambiguous, with multiplicity of meanings (Gadamer 1986c: 68-69).

“[W]e live in a time which in spite of tireless efforts to discover the definitive word of interpretation, is marked by the renunciation of certainty expressed in Hölderlin’s ‘Mnemosyne’: ‘We are a sign without interpretation.’” (Gadamer 1986c: 73). In line with this understanding of interpretation, if we understand symbol as Goethe understands it, namely everything as a symbol, or ourselves as signs like Hölderlin, we are drawn into a world of meanings in which everything has its saying in its event of meaning.

In my view, such an understanding of symbol/sign indicates that symbols are not carriers of meanings but the pathways that enable the transfer of meaning, where meaning is a movement rather than an establishment. Such a world highlights the interrelation of meanings in their events, reminding us of the “belonging together” within *Ereignis*. I agree with Goethe and Hölderlin; things point to each other in the

depths of their meaning resonating with symbol, calling for past meaning and future interpretation.

In my opinion, claiming that everything is a symbol is also indicating that everything is more than its literal meaning. It implies that there is a trace of meaning transmitted from the other things within the meaning of the thing in question. For instance, when I refer to a “tree”, there is the meaning of “life” somewhere in it, because our understanding is laden with a sense of “tree of life” in our shared consciousness. In a similar sense, when I refer to “life”, there is the meaning of “death” lurking behind it.

Symbol is essentially about being a fragment and its potential for further recognition as an increase in being and meaning. The symbol does not signify and cancel itself, it presents itself. It enables a movement of meaning a further richness that is not already defined. Symbol is one reason why the artwork is never complete: there is always more to it in the event of understanding.

CHAPTER 4

EVENT OF INTERPRETATION AND ENCOUNTER

Like Heidegger, Gadamer thinks that all understanding is finite accounting for its event character. The finitude of human understanding does not mean it is a deficient form of an infinite understanding. Understanding is essentially limited because an infinite understanding, which indicates an absolute understanding, does not make sense. Understanding is finite, because it appropriates one possibility, while closing off others in the multiplicity of occasions. Understanding is an event because it is not beholding a meaning and there is always an element of occasionality. This explains why understanding art is always an event. “The intelligible presence of something, whether an art work, an utterance, or a physical object in the world, is never a matter of it simply sitting there ‘in’ or ‘before’ one’s consciousness” (DaVia and Lynch 2024: 168).

Gadamer’s understanding of art experience is not that of a subject experiencing an art object; rather it is about what is going on in between and making them up in each encounter in an unfinished manner. For him, “artworks are interpretation-dependent and in this sense incomplete objects” (Gabriel 2021: 33). Artworks are happenings in their interpretations and presentations because there is always an element of freedom in the interpretation and presentation. Art works are not isolated entities, they are included in their experiences. In this sense they are coming from the past and moving towards the future, with an element of indeterminacy. Gadamer thinks about the nature of this indeterminacy from the point of various art forms such as music and poetry and asks:

So I ask myself: In the end is the language of tones an actual language, like the language of the art of words? Admittedly, everyone will, in fact, “hear” when silently reading poetry, albeit in a peculiarly idealized and inaudible vocalization. But now I ask myself: Isn’t there perhaps in “music-making” a similar hearing at play as in this kind of reading? (Gadamer 2021: 474).

Daniel Barenboim’s words about the truth of a musical work appear to answer Gadamer’s question. Barenboim claims that the musical notations are “much more approximate than people like to think... Because the score is not the truth. The score is not the piece. The piece is when you actually bring it to sound” (Barenboim and Said 2003: 33). Furthermore, each presentation of a musical piece is a different and unrepeatable event, even if it is played by the same orchestra, due to the ephemeral nature of music that only happens in between two silences. “A performance has only one possibility” (Barenboim and Said 2003: 28-29). Therefore, a musical score yields an immense variety of both interpretation and presentation. As a transition art, it might be more apparent that music is essentially characterized with possibility of events. However, it should also be noted that other arts are not without their variety because presentation and interpretation are ontologically intrinsic to all art forms, because for Gadamer, art presents, rather than represents.

According to Said, there is always something elusive about reading novels that you can never completely grasp them, and in line with Gadamer’s understanding of the artwork, that there is always more of it. Said thinks that reading a work is like producing the work in a new form. This means proceeding with it as it unfolds. Said relates this to being “inward with the work” in the interpretation of the work, which unfolds in its presentation. Said refers to the tension he experiences between the fidelity towards the work and towards himself in the event of interpretation (Barenboim and Said 2003: 55). I think that Said’s explication of the tension of interpretation resonates with Gadamer’s ideas. According to Gadamer, there is an event of interpretation between one’s voice and the speaking of the text. Gadamer answers his initial question about the languages of tones and words with similar insight with Said, by claiming that there is an unbridgeable distance between the sense and the tonal form for both poetry and music. I think that it is such due to such unbridgeable distances that, there is a continuous tension of interpretation, which embodies the event of understanding.

Indeed, there remains an unbridgeable distance between the sense- and the tonal-form that one “hears” when reading in this way and every audible vocalization, even if it is one’s own voice. It is essential to let a text speak, perhaps even in front of others, the audience. To let a text speak—to be able to do that—we call interpretation. What one in making music does and what the reader does in reading with understanding seems the same (Gadamer 2021: 474).

These unbridgeable distances are the reasons why interpretations are events in line with the understanding that an artwork does not represent, but presents, as Gadamer claims. Said’s explanation about the inward happening of unfolding during such an experience, also displays how the event of understanding art is related to Heidegger’s *Ereignis*, because *Ereignis* is at the same time an event of appropriation and enowning, which means making your own.

4.1 Hermeneutic Thinking

Gadamer builds his ways of thinking within philosophical hermeneutics. What is important about him is not how he interprets the concepts of dialogue, dialectic or conversation, but the way their philosophical characteristics shape the way he thinks (Davey 2021: 59). “Gadamer likes to follow the lead of language” (Grondin 2002: 36), which enables him his way of thinking. I think that his philosophical hermeneutics is one big attempt at following that lead which mainly unfolds as dialogical¹⁵ understanding and fusion of horizons in the event of understanding. Understanding his hermeneutics is relevant to understanding his attitude to art, because he develops a hermeneutical understanding of art as a dialogical, communicative event in which truth is disclosed (Nielsen 2023: 2), as reflected in his famous saying: “[a]esthetics has to be absorbed into hermeneutics” (Gadamer 1989: 164).

Gadamer’s hermeneutics is deeply involved in art, because he thinks that artworks are essentially interpretation-dependent and for this reason incomplete. This opinion forms the basis of Gadamer’s attempt of philosophical hermeneutics. Accordingly, the

¹⁵ As Heidegger’s influence on Gadamer is considered, it is important to note that, *Truth and Method*’s appeal to the Platonic dialectic was not appreciated by Heidegger, because he specifically wanted to leave metaphysics behind and he considered Plato as the figure responsible for the western tradition’s forgetfulness about Being, which was his major problem. In his attempt to leave metaphysics behind, Heidegger carried out his philosophizing with his specific attitude to language which is called Heideggerian. Gadamer did not use Heideggerian language which he regarded as “poeticizing mode of speech” and he was explicit that he opposed creating a special language (Dostal 2002b: 29-30).

artist, the art object and the audience form the totality of the artwork. Any interpretation of the work contributes to the work. This means that an artwork stretches through the complex history of its interpretations (Gabriel 2021: 533-537), with its future prospects yet to be uncovered.

According to Gadamer, language is so much intrinsic to life that he calls us, the humans, conversation. I think that this thinking reflects his ontological emphasis on language and also dialogical thinking, which is in touch with practicality of thinking. According to him, conversation is so much an element of what we are that, he does not say “we do converse” but rather “we ourselves are conversation”. This deep ontological relevance, that surpasses an instrumental or representative understanding of language is reminiscent of the relevance he assumes when he says “all playing is a being-played” (Gadamer 1989: 111). In similar line of thinking, his whole line of thinking on art relies on the argumentation that we are not an audience to the pleasures of art, we take part in the happening of it, we belong to the event of art, we move with it.

Conversation is important for Gadamer, because it has a transformative power and it has its own “genius” for it erupts spontaneously, for this reason it does not follow a rule. Thinking in the mode of a conversation implies a movement of thought rather than an attempt for control. It is also telling that the Latin origin of “conversation” is *conversa*, which means to “turn around”. Therefore, according to Gadamer’s language ontology, language is eventful (Davey 2021: 61-72), with its possibility of turning around.

Language is speculative for Gadamer because, the realization of meaning as the event of speech bears infinite possibilities. “Such a realization is speculative in that the finite possibilities of the word are oriented toward the sense intended as toward the infinite” (Gadamer 1989: 485). In Gadamer’s hermeneutics, words are “living” and meaning is never complete, therefore language always seeks a fuller or further meaning (Davey 2021: 65). This suggests the inner movement of language that also happens within the word itself. Even our short human lives are sufficient to witness the movement that happens within the words, as we come to see how words are adapted to their connotations as well as their denotations.

Gadamer's understanding which is an open-ended event is different from the epistemological or cognitive understanding, which is related to grasping and which mainly belonged to the hermeneutical theories of the nineteenth century and particularly Wilhelm Dilthey, to whom Gadamer responds. The traditional sense of understanding is about making an ambiguous or obscure passage intelligible (Grondin 2002: 37). Therefore, it aims at a meaning that is already there, in this sense it does not indicate an "event" of understanding in the way it is argued by Gadamer.

This epistemological understanding of understanding was shaken up by Heidegger before Gadamer. Heidegger makes this shaking with his emphasis on the "practical" notion. A good cook is not necessarily a theoretician of cooking. Therefore, understanding is always related to application and self-understanding (Grondin 2002: 37-38). Besides Heidegger, there is a strong influence from Aristotle's notion of practical understanding (*phronesis*) on Gadamer's practical notion of understanding. According to Gadamer, Aristotle recognizes "that the point of practical wisdom lies in its actualization, which always entails an element of self-knowledge" (Grondin 2002: 39). For a purely cognitive understanding of understanding, the element of self-understanding would not be necessary, it would be more contingent or optional. I think that interpreting understanding with its element of practicality, which is tied to self-knowing, is one reason that makes interpretations based on subject-object dichotomy insufficient. Understanding gains its eventual nature with this emphasis as well. Understanding is not a once and for all achievement. It is a life experience with its probable difference and unique path for each one. Each understanding is an event which can be a subject of (phenomenological) description.

Within his philosophical hermeneutics, Gadamer is interested in the descriptive or the phenomenological account of understanding, which is at the same time ontological. It is considered that his *Truth and Method* is an attempt to answer the question "what is understanding?" and for him "all understanding is interpretive, hermeneutical" (Dostal 2002: 3). Understanding is linguistic and dialogical. Gadamer's dialogical event of understanding is at the same time his well-known "fusion of horizons". Fusion of horizons is related to practical application of knowledge; with the role it assigns to tradition and prejudice. For Gadamer, all understanding is at the same time practical, for it is not external to understanding, but inherent in it. "What one understands makes

a difference in what one does” (Dostal 2002: 3). In short, understanding is a long and incomplete event for Gadamer that he has devoted a life time of philosophical thinking to make a phenomenology of it.

Hermeneutic experience is an event of language on which Gadamer elaborates. When Gadamer is talking about experience (*Erfahrung*), he means it with the “inner historicity of experience”, pointing out to its difference from the objectified experience of natural sciences. How he understands experience is different from the one that is referred by scientific methods, even including the historico-critical method of human sciences, that rely on the verifiability and repeatability of explanations (Gadamer 1989: 355). Gadamer’s experiences are peculiar for they are not repeatable, they are events. Such experiences have their truth which let us acknowledge the real against all dogmatism.

Thus experience is experience of human finitude. The truly experienced person is one who has taken this to heart, who knows that he is master neither of time nor the future. The experienced man knows that all foresight is limited and all plans uncertain. In him is realized the truth value of experience... the experienced person acquires a new openness to new experiences... In it all dogmatism, which proceeds from the soaring desires of the human heart, reaches an absolute barrier. Experience teaches us to acknowledge the real (Gadamer 1989: 365).

Genuine experience which is the experience of human finitude is related to experience of one’s own historicity. It is experiencing the fact that nothing returns, (Gadamer 1989: 366), in this sense it is totally different from the repeatable experience of science. Hermeneutical experience is an experience that is concerned with tradition. Gadamer’s understanding of tradition is like a Thou here; it “is not an object; it relates itself to us” (Gadamer 1989: 366). When tradition is a Thou to us, it means that we can enter into a dialogical relation with it. It is not that we are an indifferent recipient of it. I think that Gadamer’s understanding of tradition is ingenious in the sense that it does not imply a conservation but a conversation. For him, tradition is not one more repetition of the already established structure but it is an event of dialogical happening, within an I-Thou relationship, which is mutual.

This relation is not immediate but reflective. To every claim there is a counterclaim. This is why it is possible for each of the partners in the relationship reflectively to outdo the other. One claims to know the other’s claim from his point of view and even to understand the other better than the other understands himself. In this way the Thou loses the immediacy with which it makes its claim (Gadamer 1989: 367).

A genuine I-Thou relation is possible only within openness. In order to “experience the Thou truly as a Thou” we need to let him/her “really say something to us”. This is a mutual openness between the one who speaks and the one who listens. The listener has to be fundamentally open. Belonging together happens when both are able to listen to each other and a hermeneutical experience is possible only within such openness (Gadamer 1989: 369).

Hermeneutical experience is concerned with tradition... But tradition is not simply a process that experience teaches us to know and govern; it is language—i.e., it expresses itself like a Thou. A Thou is not an object; it relates itself to us. It would be wrong to think that this means that what is experienced in tradition is to be taken as the opinion of another person, a Thou... [T]he relationship to the Thou and the meaning of experience implicit in that relation must be capable of teaching us something about hermeneutical experience. For tradition is a genuine partner in dialogue, and we belong to it, as does the I with a Thou (Gadamer 1989: 366).

When we are within such an I-Thou relation to tradition; tradition does not appear as a set of dogma, or a force of dictation, but a voice from the past that we can reflect on, in an open relationship. In my interpretation of Gadamer’s emphasis, we are not positioned under a tradition to obey; we are rather by a tradition to listen to what it will say. Such an understanding of tradition is in compliance with his consideration of tradition as a genuine partner in dialogue. Tradition as a “thou” also implies that it has its movement, its openness for a change, my possibility of saying something to it, its possibility of listening to me. I think, defining feature of such an understanding of tradition is not its strength as the status quo, but the accumulation of an inner ear and voice within its body. Tradition conveys a voice from what has been accumulated from the past I-Thou dialogues. Gadamer’s understanding of tradition contributes to the event character of his understanding of hermeneutic experience. Even tradition has an independence that reminds us the independence of the artwork or the text that enable phenomenological hermeneutics.

Gadamer relates the openness that is required for hermeneutical experience, dialogical thinking and a genuine I-Thou relation to the “question”. Question brings about openness because it has the knowledge of not knowing, which is indeed difficult to be known as shown by Plato. According to Gadamer, question has such a hermeneutic priority that “...the structure of the question is implicit in all experience. We cannot have experiences without asking questions”. Furthermore, experiences shock us because they are beyond our expectations (Gadamer 1989: 370-375). This emphasis

seems also to support the ontological relevance of both the question and hermeneutical thinking because it foresees a relation between experience and the openness to dialogue. “We cannot understand without wanting to understand, that is, without wanting to let something be said” (Gadamer 2007: 129). In my opinion, this openness does not come by itself, it is to be achieved, first by wanting to let something be said, as emphasized by Gadamer.

In our phenomenological and hermeneutical experience of art, we are absorbed in a work of art, that is, it arrests and captivates us (Nielsen 2023: 52). Gadamer says that the artwork makes a claim on us. I think that this is another aspect of having an I-Thou relation with the work. As the work appears to us as a “thou”, it makes a claim on us and our encounter with it happens in a dialogical mode. In my view, we do not observe such a claim in the aesthetic consciousness or aesthetic differentiation as they diminish art’s ability to address us. In this sense, the relation we experience in a case of aesthetic differentiation is more like an I-it relation.

Gadamer envisions an interplay between I and you in the event of poetry. He explains the happening nature of meaning in an event of movement (Gadamer 1997). In his “introduction” for Gadamer’s article on Celan, “Who Am I and Who Are You?”, Bruns argues that “what matters for Gadamer is not the identity of the “I” or the “you” but the intimacy between them—an intimacy which is outside the determinacy of meaning” (1997: 27). Poetry, which is an “event of language” in Celan’s words is a matter of movement and it has a dialogical character for Gadamer. Poetry addresses itself to an unknown “you” from its distance and strangeness. This “you” brings the otherness into the nearness of the poem. This is the event of poetry with its transformative power. He writes, “[it] thus appears scarcely necessary to know who I and You are. For the poem speaks about something that happens to both. I and you are both transformed, self-transforming. What happens to them is time” (Gadamer 1997: 89).

The concepts of dialogue, dialectic and conversation disclose themselves throughout his philosophical attitude to hermeneutics, because “Gadamer locates his hermeneutical theory between phenomenology and dialectic” (Dostal 2002: 8). His hermeneutics calls for a dialogue between the text and the interpreter. Gadamer

believes in the transformative power of conversation as also reflected in his lifelong interest in Plato's dialogues. According to him, what makes conversation peculiar to thinking is that it is unpredictable, its disclosure is "without rule". The mode of conversation is a movement of thought, in line with his language ontology as "language is eventful" (Davey 2021: 62). The fact that language is eventful, has many implications about why our understanding art is also eventful. In my view, our understanding art is eventful at least for the reasons that language which we rely on for our understanding is eventful and there is also this dialogical, conversational nature to our understanding art, which is never complete in its meaning. Artworks' speaking to us a saying that is more than their message and their saying is open for further interpretation due to their contemporaneity that enable them continue their event of meaning across time and space. Artworks have a specific position for Gadamer's hermeneutics because artworks have their standing and they always have excess of meaning. "The artwork exemplifies the dialectic of distance and closeness in its claim upon us, for in spite of its alien character, Gadamer argues, it can speak to us" (Dostal 2002b: 31).

According to Gadamer, questioning is an art; it is the art of dialectic. It has nothing to do with winning an argument, it is for seeking the truth. It does not aim at something known or decided beforehand. That is why it is associated with openness, freedom and art. It has the open-ended flow of an event. Still, it is about knowing to ask question, which is indeed difficult, even more difficult than answering. Gadamer notes that in our language, questions "occur" to us and questioning is "more a passion than an action" (Gadamer 1989: 374-375), reminding us the way art occurs to a romantic artist by way of an inspiration or a muse. Even the wording implicitly reflects the artistic element presumed by genuine questions. A question asserts a readiness for an encounter. I relate asking a genuine question with the openness needed for an art encounter. Questions call for an encounter, they make themselves available for it, therefore they are difficult. It is like encountering art, which is where an event of art happens.

4.2 Art Encounter

Gadamer's hermeneutical philosophy puts a special emphasis on the interpretation of the experience of art, whose utmost significance takes place in the encounter and the lingering with the work, which is an ongoing possibility due to the incompleteness of the work's meaning. It can be said that his hermeneutics offers itself for mainly comprehending the experience of encountering an artwork. This is an experience that shocks both the expectations and self-understanding. "Gadamer is pulling aesthetics out of the traditional realm of disinterested objectivity and into the realm of hermeneutical encounter." (Palmer 2007:124).

The intimacy with which the work of art touches us is at the same time, in enigmatic fashion, a shattering and demolishing of the familiar. It is not only the impact of a "This means you!" ["Das bist du!"] that is disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us: "You must change your life!" (Gadamer 2007: 131).

An encounter triggers an event of meaning. This is a forceful event with life implications. "The experience of art does not only understand a recognizable meaning, as historical hermeneutics does in its handling of texts. The work of art that says something confronts us with ourselves" (Gadamer 2007: 129). For this reason, we enter into an event when we really encounter a work of art. We get exposed to something unfamiliar, something foreign. We are challenged by a call for understanding something other than we already know. A real encounter is possible only with an openness to the unfamiliar. A real encounter has life changing prospects.

For of all the things that confront us in nature and history, it is the work of art that speaks to us most directly. It possesses a mysterious intimacy that grips our entire being, as if there were no distance at all between us and the work and every encounter with it were an encounter with ourselves (Gadamer 2007: 124).

Yusuf Atılgan makes a dramatic description of the power and fleeting nature of art encounter in his novel *Aylak Adam*, (*The Loiterer*). Ironically, the life changing power of the encounter evaporates as the person counters the ordinary. I think that this passage also testifies the saying power of the work (a movie in this case) which invigorates life. However, meeting with the ordinary, that which has nothing to say in the mood of a general indifference, diminishes the power of the encounter. It makes me think that encounters can make much more sense if they could also achieve festive character, when they can be shared experiences within a community. Atılgan writes:

In our age, there lives a short-lived creature that the past centuries did not know. A person who has come out of the cinema. The movie he saw did something to him. He is not a person who only thinks about his own interests. He is at peace with people. It is expected that he will do great things. But he is extinguished in five or ten minutes. The street is full of people who have not come out of the cinema; with their sullen faces, their indifference, their sneaky walks, they take him in and melt him. (Atılgan 2007: 18)¹⁶.

Encountering art is entering into the autonomous time of the work. It is entering into its movement without knowing beforehand, without the already known. This is opening oneself to new possibilities of experience. Such an experience is not based on universals. This is a change triggering experience. It is a change in one's world (Bruns 2006: 38). Gadamer says, "The work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it" (Gadamer 1989. 107). Art encounter indicates the singular and irreducible event of art, which cannot be isolated from the contingency of chance conditions.

Gadamer's idea, ... is that the work of art is more of an event than it is an object, in which case the main question to ask about the work is... "How does it happen?" Gadamer's answer is that the work takes place in our encounter with it, that is, what is encountered is the coming-into-appearance of the work, which is not an event that merely reproduces an original production; it is the emergence, as if for the first time, of the original itself (Bruns 2006: 34).

Appropriation, which is one of the translations of Heidegger's *Ereignis*, happens in art encounters. In this sense, it is a way of happening of the truth of art. "Appropriation means: the original can only come into being *when I make it my own*" (Bruns 2006. 39). The event of appropriation is also a task in the sense that there is an element of responsibility in each encounter. Appropriation is related to bringing the work to my own historical and cultural environment, rather than being in an abstract attitude towards it (Bruns 2006: 39).

Lingering with the artwork is an important aspect of the encounter with art, because lingering intensifies the encounter and fulfills it as an event. Lingering with an artwork is more than a single viewing or hearing it. It is an engaged participation with the work over time, by returning to the work repeatedly, on different occasions for new insights (Nielsen 2023: 97).

¹⁶ The translation is done by myself with suggestions from the "Google Translate".

When we linger with an artwork, we neither engage in a “simple perception of what is there,” owing in part to the operation of the hermeneutical-as in all perception and understanding. Nor do we encounter the artwork in the mode of being of presentness-at-hand and as a detached observer. Whether we are viewing representational art, reading a poem, or listening to absolute music, understanding these works involves seeing-as—that is, re-cognizing what is presented, and in the case of absolute music and abstract art “entering into a relation with what is meaningful” even when the relation is marked by significant indeterminacy. With respect to absolute music, we do not simply hear pure sounds, but instead we hear (or attempt to hear) themes, patterns, and rhythmic, harmonic, or melodic motifs (even when these are absent or too complex for us to discern) (Nielsen 2023: 28).

Barenboim talks about his playing of contemporary composers such as Pierre Boulez, Harrison Birtwistle and Elliott Carter, whom Edward Said calls ‘difficult composers’, frequently, because he believes in understanding difficult work through familiarity. Their frequent playing makes them more familiar. He claims: “Familiarity in this case, does not breed contempt, but breeds understanding” (Barenboim and Said 2003: 53). Barenboim’s insight is in line with that of Gadamer’s because he refers to the long path of understanding, which is supported with lingering with the work. We discern that his each such understanding is a movement towards familiarity, where it becomes a challenge for atonal music.

Work of art has its own independence that surpasses the intention of the creator and with its open ended happening that extends towards the future. “The work of art is the expression of a truth that cannot be reduced to what its creator actually thought in it” (Gadamer 2007: 124)

The creator of a work of art may have in mind the public of his own time, but the real being of his work is what it is able to say, and this being reaches fundamentally beyond any historical confinement. In this sense, the work of art occupies a timeless present (Gadamer 2007: 125).

Nielsen (2023) displays how Banksy’s street art exemplifies the thinking behind Gadamer’s hermeneutics. Street art is made with an awareness that it is subject to erasure, destruction or alteration, in a way that emphasizes its intrinsic ephemerality. Furthermore, street works are highly open to engagement of the spectators, in the life conditions they happen. In this sense these works are subject to happening even in the literal sense. Their original occurrence becomes subject to change or transformation as soon as it is made. We can follow their change through their digital images, while both the original and the images are part of the work’s dynamic and performative ontology. Besides these, there is something peculiar about Banksy’s art because it has

been “recontextualized in the Artworld and [became] commodities” (Nielsen 2023: 101). What happens to an artwork’s event of meaning when it is commodified is another controversy that is open for discussion. What Gadamer calls events of meaning are achieved with lingering with the work, in an active engagement and an attunement with the work. They are about listening to the works’ speaking not shopping images.

According to Gadamer, the work “speaks” not only as a piece from the past, with its historic voice, but it speaks to us anew due to its independence. Every encounter is a different event. This is also reflected in the contemporaneity of the work that causes its independence from its original epoch and place.

Is it really the case that a work of art, which comes out of a past or alien lifeworld and is transferred into our historically educated world, becomes a mere object of aesthetic-historical enjoyment and says nothing more of what it originally had to say? “To say something,” “to have something to say”—are these simply metaphors grounded in an undetermined aesthetic formative value that is the real truth? Or is the reverse the case? Is the aesthetic quality of formation only the condition for the fact that the work bears its meaning within itself and has something to say to us? This question gives us access to the real problematic dimension of the theme “aesthetics and hermeneutics.” (Gadamer 2007: 125)

Gadamer asks what can the artwork that is deprived of its contextual significance say to us. What can the meaning of a work’s merely aesthetic formative values be? When Picasso encountered African masks or Van Gogh encountered Japanese prints, what they saw was different from what the African or the Japanese artists had intended while they were creating them. Even though the artists encountered them without their context, their formative qualities had a lot to say for these two artists.

4.3 Two Cases of Encounter in Art History

According to Gadamer, the mode of existence of a work of art is its presentation. Thinking in terms of presentation for a work is more in line with our common sense understanding for the works that are literally enacted, for instance for music, which is a transition art. However, Gadamer’s understanding of presentation is not confined to actual events of performance. “Not only the performing arts but also the visual arts require enactment through engaged participation... [A]ll art must be performed or enacted in order to speak and continue to speak to those who linger with it” (Nielsen 2023: 97). When Gadamer argues that the artworks present themselves, he means all forms of art encompassing the static arts such as painting, as well as transition arts.

Paintings present themselves with the claims they make and the possibility of open-ended events of encounter they call for. In this sense, during an encounter, a viewer does not counter what the work represents, but what it presents. It presents itself to its many possibilities of its being seen. In this sense, in the early 1900s European artists encountered traditional African art and mainly sculpture with new possibilities of seeing it. This encounter had a powerful influence on Picasso, as well as other *avant-garde* artists including Henri Matisse. These artists did not have an idea about the original meaning and function of the art they encountered. They did not know the context of the works they saw. Even though this was mainly an encounter with the formal qualities of the works, it was a strong encounter, triggering new prospects of seeing for both Picasso and Matisse, in their struggle with the Western legacy of art. In these works, they recognized a different sense of composition and they “adapted these qualities to their own efforts to move beyond the naturalism that had defined Western art since the Renaissance” (PabloPicasso.org 2025). Picasso recounts his encounter with African art at Trocadero Museum of Ethnology in a dramatic tone as follows:

A smell of mould and neglect caught me by the throat. I was so depressed that I would have chosen to leave immediately... But I forced myself to stay, to examine these masks, all these objects that people had created with a sacred, magical purpose, to serve as intermediaries between them and the unknown, hostile forces surrounding them, attempting in that way to overcome their fears by giving them colour and form. And then I understood what painting really meant. It's not an aesthetic process; it's a form of magic that interposes itself between us and the hostile universe, a means of seizing power by imposing a form on our terrors as well as on our desires. The day I understood that, I had found my path (quoted in Andrew 2006).

It is possible to hear a Gadamerian voice in this explanation. Picasso here reveals how an encounter is a matter of effort, that happens in a mood of discomfort against the unfamiliar and how it demands tarrying with the work. He explicitly refers to his event of understanding that is more than an aesthetic process. He implicitly refers to the dialogical movement of thinking in a mode of I-Thou relation. Picasso's words appear as if they embody what Gadamer meant by his saying “[t]he work of art that says something confronts us with ourselves” (Gadamer 2007: 129). Despite the unfamiliarity of the encounter, it contributes to Picasso's questioning of the familiar as well, as part of his effort of understanding. Such initial encounters in the history are crucial, because they are not supported by an already established literature or a body

of discourse to supplement the dialogical thinking that is going on between the work and the viewer. The encounter happens as a pure I-Thou relation, in the lack of a body of discourse.

Picasso was aware of the power of this encounter, which had been influential for laying the foundations of his groundbreaking 1907 painting *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*. *Les Femmes d'Alger* is an exceptional painting in art history, because with a single painting, Picasso discarded so many artistic conventions such as naturalism, perspective, three dimensionality, sense of beauty and representation. *Les Femmes d'Alger* is a big step towards Cubism, that was extremely shocking even for the avant-garde of the era. At the time it was painted, it had even surpassed the imaginations and prospects of the most forward-thinking artists, such as Matisse. It is known that Matisse was another source of inspiration for the painting because *Les Femmes d'Alger* was at the same time a response to Matisse's *Joy of Life*, which was a response to the Cézanne's *Bathers*. These succession of responses reveal how art proceeds and carries out its historic movement with the power of encounters. The power of encounters in art might be resembled to the power of steam for machinery; they both trigger movement.

The background of this painting consists of hundreds of preparatory paintings and drawings that have been worked by Picasso for a six-month period in his struggle to reinvent Western painting. Even this period gives an idea about the intensity and nature of the encounter behind this painting. An encounter cannot be defined by the actual period of encountering a work. This is particularly true when artworks appeal to more than the senses or pleasure and the encounter happens in a dialogical understanding as it is emphasized by Gadamer. Strong encounters continue their happening within the person for long periods as the person lingers with the work, which is not necessarily about being literally exposed to the work each time. I think that it is possible that the inner dialogue of a person about an encounter might continue for years. Encounters are crucial for the event of understanding works of art because they also make up the interpretation horizons of persons, which move with their lingering on works. In a way, horizons are made up with encounters.

With *Les Femmes d'Alger*, Picasso brings various influences from a variety of traditions together. He borrows, combines and transforms references from Western art history,

including the Egyptian, and the art from Africa, Oceania and the Americas, in a manner of appropriating their strangeness into something unique and unseen before. Gadamer says that “an effect of strangeness is able to trigger its own power to attract, which leads to the viewer’s appropriation” (Gadamer 2007b: 199). Here Picasso appropriates various elements of strangeness as a creator himself, because he had appropriated that strangeness in his encounters, as a viewer. With Cubism Picasso introduces us a new syntax for seeing, which he made his own, in other words he had “enowned”.¹⁷ With his work he makes us see how he had appropriated a new way of seeing. This new way of seeing calls new appropriations from its viewers. Encounters are challenges of appropriation and they can also trigger creation. In other words, hearing a saying in its strangeness, can cause that person’s own saying, which also has its new claim in its new strangeness.

In the painting *Demoiselles, women of Avignon* are depicted with angular lines and flat, geometric planes in the form of cubic shapes. Their faces are sharp-edged and radically simplified as in African masks, with suggestions of abstraction. The strangeness of these figures reflects Picasso’s encounter with the African, Iberian, and Oceanic art and other works from France’s ethnographic museums. The enormous almond-shaped eyes of the women are a result of these various influences and they are fixed on the viewers in a daring manner (Museum of Modern Art 2025), in a way to further emphasize their strangeness. It is remarkable that this daring look from a fragmented surrounding with its mood of indifference that comes from detachment will be a recurring image of the coming century.

This work is as uncomfortable to look at as it is impossible to look away from. No other painting in the history of Western art so boldly, and baldly, confronts the viewer. Three of the five naked protagonists stare outward, trapping us with their gazes, just as the picture’s complicated space, populated by bodies that simultaneously press against and recede from its surface, draws us in. Pictorial conventions are banished and idealized notions of beauty jettisoned. The two rightmost figures’ masklike features are often connected to Picasso’s visit, midway through his work on the painting, to the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris—the city’s first anthropological museum. There he had an epiphanic encounter with African and

17 It is noteworthy that “enowning” and “appropriation” are among the translations of Heidegger’s *Ereignis* to English. “So owning and being owned, appropriating (i.e., taking as one’s own) and conveyance (giving to the ownership of another), are understood in terms of things being adapted or suited to each other (Wrathall 2021: 28).

Oceanic art, which influenced the work's ferocious antinaturalism—the degree to which the depicted figures resist mimetic norms (Museum of Modern Art 2025).

Demoiselles had a lasting influence in art history, besides laying the foundations of Cubism. Gadamer regards Cubism as one further step in the change that started in the second half of the nineteenth century by the breakdown of linear perspective. It is such break with the tradition that it changes the self-understanding of arts and the assumption that picture is a view (Gadamer 1987: 7-8). This break is a challenge for understanding, that is a calling for philosophical hermeneutics, because how we understand such a work is an indeterminate event towards a not yet established meaning. It is necessarily an encounter that you cannot dismiss if you really look.

We can no longer see a Cubist picture or a nonobjective painting at a glance, with a merely passive gaze. We must make an active contribution of our own and make an effort to synthesize the outlines of the various planes as they appear on the canvas (Gadamer 1987: 8).

Demoiselles might be the painting that has caused the highest controversy and the most landmark change within a single work. This work's ability to shock has been marginal in the history of the art and it can be regarded as a showcase experience of art that enables a discussion on art with Gadamerian terms, besides the importance of art encounter. Art has the power to shock because it is unpredictable, it is not confined to expectations, it has its happening as an event. And it is with shocks that art can be interested in life, it can surpass its understanding that is assumed as merely "disinterested pleasure" and retain its life changing power. Particularly the works that are "uncomfortable to look at and impossible to look away from" make more demanding claims and they call us to the event of art. Art happens when there is some discomfort to encounter or an element of unfamiliarity to understand.

One of the first and most intense encounters with the painting was that of Braque's. It is known that it took time for him to start an appreciation of the painting. He was both repelled and intrigued by the painting, which became a source of inspiration for his later effort of developing Cubism with Picasso in the coming years. I think that Braque had a real encounter with the work and he had long experiences of dialogical thinking with the work. According to my interpretation, his experience could have been a prime example of an "I-Thou" relation, in encountering a work, because it does not rely on the comfort of a similar dialogue that was held before. In this sense, it should have

been totally direct because it is a dialogue happening for the first time with something unseen beforehand. Therefore, it is how I assume a dialogical understanding unfolds in a creative event of encounter that repels and attracts at the same time, as a belonging together.

Paintings such as *Demoiselles* are remarkable for the shock effect they arouse. There is something peculiar about the element of shock in modern art. In his questioning of the significance of modern art, Gadamer states that: “Many outstanding representatives of modern art emphatically reject the pictorial expectations with which we approach it. Such art generally tends to produce an explicit shock effect upon us” (Gadamer 1989f: 92). In my view, the nature of this shock element in our encounters is also subject to contemporaneity. As 21st century people, we cannot feel similar shocks to the ones experienced in early 20th even by the artists of the time, because our reception of art has been attuned to the modern art. It is not as new as before. Our horizons are different from the horizons of people a century before. Therefore, our events of encounter and the nature of our shock are different. It seems much less probable that we will encounter so much ground breaking by a single work after in our era. This aspect of contemporaneity also reveals how and why our reception of art are events.

According to my understanding *Demoiselles* is a historic example for being both a product of and a cause for the force of encounter. Picasso’s encounter with African art had opened him horizons that gave him an understanding to challenge the Western art. Picasso has challenged Western art with also the influence he brought from Western art including Baroque period, Cézanne, El Greco, Velazquez, Gaugin, Manet and Degas. Even in his challenge to Western art, where he will redefine it, he builds on it, because they constitute his horizon. Gadamer explicates such events of art by saying “in every present moment not only is a horizon of the future opened up, but also the horizon of the past is in play” (Gadamer 2007b: 198). When Picasso makes one large step towards modern art, towards opening up a new future to art, by suggesting new ways of seeing he does not do this without the ties from the past. This is in line with Gadamer’s appreciation of the value of tradition for understanding. Tradition lurks somewhere even within the most groundbreaking creation, just like Yves Klein’s *Blue*.

In my opinion, another instance of such an influential encounter in art history is Van Gogh's encounter of Japanese prints. At the end of 19th century, there was an admiration for Japanese objects in Europe. At first, Van Gogh considered this interest as merely a pleasant curiosity. However, after lingering with Japanese prints, he started to really encounter and understand them as examples of artistic creativity equal to the classical masterpieces of European art (Van Gogh Museum 2025). Japanese art taught Van Gogh a new way of looking, with its visual inventions and unusual spatial effects. Learning to see by experiencing the presentness of art is an issue also for Gadamer. As if he is referring to Van Gogh's effort to teach himself seeing, Gadamer writes about the encounters with artworks from bygone times that have lost their place in the world; "we learn to see the relationships of light and shadow and to have in mind the circumstances which had influenced the shaping of the picture. All this can teach us to see better" (Gadamer 2007b: 200). There is a possibility of learning by lingering with a work. Encountering Japanese art taught Van Gogh a new way of seeing, and he has shown this new way to us with his work, as his gift to humanity.

Japanese artists often left the middle ground of their compositions empty, while objects in the foreground were sometimes enlarged. They regularly excluded the horizon too, or abruptly cropped the elements of the picture at the edge. This all helped European artists learn that they did not always have to arrange their artworks in the traditional way – from close up to far away, like in a peep show (Van Gogh Museum 2025).

Japanese art has given Van Gogh the inspiration for preference of flat surface to an illusion of depth. Van Gogh combined flatness with his characteristic swirling brushwork, with gay color effects from Japanese prints. He thought himself to see with a Japanese eye. In one of his letters to Theo, he writes: "After some time your vision changes, you see with a more Japanese eye, you feel colour differently. I'm also convinced that it's precisely through a long stay here that I'll bring out my personality" (Van Gogh Museum 2025c). Vincent regarded Japanese prints like a call for a modern kind of painting and he keenly responded to their call with their expanses of color and their stylization. In one of his letters, Van Gogh writes, "[a]ll my work is based to some extent on Japanese art" (Van Gogh Museum 2025d). In Heideggerian words, it could probably be said that Van Gogh has appropriated Japanese art in an event of enowning and a belonging together as implied by the meaning of *Ereignis*.

I think that lingering with a work can enable a peculiar form of learning that also accounts for and explains the open-ended possibilities of art as a communicative event in line with Gadamer's insight. Because when you learn from a teacher, a book or another educational medium, you learn what is more or less established as knowledge, however, when you learn from a work, which is unfamiliar to you and which is not made to teach anything, you learn something for the first time, you learn something unintended and you are by yourself at the frontiers of human's learning. You are alone next to something unfamiliar and yet with its claim. This kind of learning is at the same time an event of understanding a work, in the intimacy and power of an I-Thou relationship. This way of learning happens with the openness and attunement to what the work speaks, what it claims.

Another Gadamerian relevance of these encounters is about their bringing forth questions of aesthetic differentiation, which is an extension of aesthetic consciousness. Gadamer is critical of this consciousness which separates the form and the content of an artwork. Picasso and Van Gogh have encountered Japanese and African arts presumably in moods of aesthetic differentiation, since they could not have related the works with their original ceremonial, religious or social contexts. They saw these works as pure form. Yet they experienced genuine encounters with transformative power. I think that a subtle argumentation can be suggested for these cases with the vocabulary of Gadamer. The strength of these encounters comes from their openness to the unfamiliar and their triggering of a long event of dialogical thinking even if it is only on the formal elements. According to my understanding what Gadamer actually detests is not specifically a concern for formal elements, but disinterestedness in life. Form is related to life. Forms are extensions of life and they also reflect how life is perceived. Form can also be a heated subject for encounter as forms are also bearers of horizons. To my interpretation the thing that Gadamer detests in aesthetic differentiation is, not entering into a *lively* dialogue with the work. It is accessing the work with purely with senses, without a dialogical participation in the work.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

One reason that makes art, such a main question for Gadamer is art's capacity to surpass representational truth. Art has its truth with its element of participation as displayed in the concept of "play"; its unique temporality in line with its dimension of "festival", and its excess of meaning as reflected by its relevance to the concept of "symbol". Understanding art is an event because of these elements that account for the movement of its meaning. Understanding art has a contemporaneous dimension that yields its different happening in each time and place.

In his discussion about the temporality of art, Gadamer agrees that music has a distinction among other arts, due to its coming to stand in the performance, because music is there when it is made. Even though other arts also have a temporal nature and truth about their being understood, "nowhere does it pass by as this pure moving than as in music" (Gadamer 2021: 475). In this sense, it is apparent that music itself has the property of event as well as its understanding. Even though music's event property is more evident than other forms of art, it does not mean that other forms do not have this property. All arts have their temporality that make up their event character. It is about the ontology of art that its meaning is never exhausted and understanding it is never complete, even though it is in a static form like a painting. In this sense two events of encounter are explicated to reflect on the happening of meaning that is possible for a static art such as painting. There is a movement of meaning in all forms of art.

I think that one should be able to play Mozart and Beethoven with the greatest sense of discovery and of the unexpected. In other words, you have to be able to bring the listener so immediately into the piece that he, then, makes the journey, although he knows what is coming. You have to be able to make him forget that he knows (Barenboim and Said 2003: 53).

I think that this remark made by Barenboim displays the event of meaning and how art is an experience of happening with so much insight. It conveys that the discovery of an artwork can continue for both the performer and the audience in its each event. Even though you listen to a piece you know so well, it can be a journey, where you can experience a new encounter with the work, because its saying has not been completed. It is also possible that you can hear the unexpected even from a piece you know so well by Mozart, when you have the attunement. This is a happening between the familiarity and the unfamiliarity regarding the same work in the interplay of remembrance and forgetting.

Gadamer's aversion to aesthetic consciousness is related to his mission of justifying the truth of art and its transformative power. Art encounter is not about a subject's sensing an object, it is a dialogical event that can never be completed by reaching up an ultimate meaning. According to Gadamer, art is a communicative event with a claim that calls for an encounter and participation which has the power of transforming lives. Art happens in a different way in each event and every time, laying the long path of understanding, which goes on forever. While aesthetic differentiation is about separation of form and content, where the subject and object in an understanding of art that relies on representation, we can speak about a gathered unity of the experience of the art work in its event of presentation. There is a speculative dimension about the meaning of the work of art. In this respect, there is always a possibility of excess of meaning in our event of understanding the work of art.

According to D. H. Lawrence, Cézanne is the person who understood the apple very well, better than anybody for he understood and showed us the "appleyness of the apple" (Deleuze 1981). This reveals that apple has a truth to be showed us by Cézanne, that we did not have beforehand. In one of his quotes, Picasso says "When Henri Matisse dies, Chagall will be the only painter left who understands what color really is" (PabloPicasso.org 2025b), hinting us the difficulty of understanding color. Deleuze asks "what did Michelangelo understand?" in his painting lessons in 1981 and answers: "He understood, for instance, and it's quite an accomplishment, he understood 'a large male back'".

It is thought provoking to assert that what Michelangelo best understood was the large back of a man, or Cézanne was the person who has best understood the apple, without completing its understanding. Understanding an apple has not finished by Cézanne. Understanding colour is a never-ending task. These words display, how understanding is a rigorous task, that there are only a few who can achieve an intense understanding of certain things. This can also be claimed for understanding works of art. It can be argued that Glenn Gould is the person who best understood Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, with his variety of interpretations. I think that these examples embody the point Gadamer makes about understanding in terms of his phenomenological hermeneutics. They reveal us the long and demanding path of understanding that is never complete, when we really encounter in an open way. Artworks continue their lives, with the lives of humans in their events of truth.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKE ÖZET

Bu tez, Gadamer'in hermeneutik fenomenoloji yaklaşımına göre sanat anlayışının nasıl bir "olay" olduğunu ele almaktadır. Gadamer'e göre anlam bir olaydır çünkü anlam bir temsil meselesi değildir, bu nedenle önceden belirlenmiş bir içeriğe göndermede bulunmaz. Gadamer'in hermeneutiği, semantik yaklaşımdan farklıdır. Semantik, anlamın "ne olduğunu" incelerken, Gadamer anlamı bir oluş, bir gerçekleşme olarak görür. Gadamer'e göre anlamın açık uçlu yapısı ile uyumlu olarak anlam hareket etmektedir.

Sanatın Gadamer düşüncesinde özel bir yeri vardır, Gadamer, kendi "hakikat" anlayışını sanatla ilişkilendirir. Gadamer'e göre sanatın anlaşılması zaman ve mekâna göre değişen ve her karşılaşmada farklı bir şekilde gerçekleşen diyalojik yapısı ve eşzamanlılığıyla olay niteliğindedir.

Bu çalışmanın İkinci Bölümü genel olarak olay ontolojisini ele aldıktan sonra Gadamer üzerinde de etkisi olan Heidegger'in özellikle geç dönem düşüncesinin temelinde yer alan *Ereignis* (olay/oluş) kavramını inceler. Daha sonra, Gadamer'in olay anlayışı, onun fenomenolojik hermeneutiğini oluşturan anlam ve anlama olayları üzerinden ortaya konur. Üçüncü bölüm, sanat anlayışına ayrılmıştır. Bu bölümde Heidegger'in sanat anlayışının aktarılmasının ardından, Gadamer'in sanat anlayışı kendisinin temel olarak sanatla ilişkilendirdiği "oyun", "şölen" ve "sembol" kavramları üzerinden ele alınır. Özellikle bu kavramların olay niteliği tartışılır. Sanat, "oyun" kavramında vurgulanan katılım ögesiyle; "festival" özelliğiyle belirtilen kendine has zamansallığıyla ve "sembol" kavramıyla açığa çıkan anlam fazlalığıyla kendi hakikatini oluşturur ve bir olay olarak gerçekleşir.

Dördüncü Bölüm, Gadamer'in hermeneutik düşüncesinin ayrıntılı bir şekilde açıklanmasına ayrılmıştır. Bu yaklaşım temelde diyalojiktir ve dili spekülasyon bir olay olarak görür. Sanat eseri ile karşılaşma, eser üzerinde geçirilen zaman ile esere katılma konuları ele alınır. Bu anlamda, sanat tarihinde önemli etkileri olan iki olay olarak Picasso'nun Afrika sanatıyla, Van Gogh'un ise Japon sanatıyla karşılaşmaları ve bu karşılaşmaların yeni eserlerin yaratılmasına etkisi incelenir. Bu sanat karşılaşmaları, Gadamerci bir perspektifle eşzamanlılık, estetik bilinç gibi Gadamer'in tartıştığı kavramlar üzerinden yorumlanır. Gadamer'in kendine özgü felsefe yapma tarzı ve bu tarzın yansıması olan diyalojik düşünce doğrultusunda, eser boyunca orkestra şefi Daniel Barenboim ile edebiyat eleştirmeni Edward Said arasındaki tartışmalara da göndermeler yapılmaktadır. Bu tez aynı zamanda diyalojik yapısıyla bir olay olarak cereyan eden Gadamer'in düşünce yapısını da açığa vurmaktadır.

Heidegger'in Olay Anlayışı: *Ereignis*

Felsefe, tarih boyunca, ağırlıklı olarak özü, tözü, idea'yı, formu, ilkeleri ya da kökeni arayarak sabit olanı bulma çabasında olmuştur. Düşünce yaygın olarak soyutlamalar biçiminde ilerlemiş, değişmeyen aramış ve durağan olana yönelmiştir. Geleneksel metafizik; tarihsellik, değişim, dönüşüm, dinamik süreçler, oluş gibi kavramları göz ardı etme eğilimindedir. Bu eğilimin çağdaş felsefe tarafından farklı şekillerde sorgulanmasıyla olay ontolojisi gündeme gelmiştir. Gadamer ve Heidegger olay ontolojisini benimseyen düşünürler arasındadır.

Gadamer, kendisini Heidegger'in hem "izleyicisi", hem de "onun gerisinde kalan" biri olarak tanımlar. Gadamer, Heidegger'in daha cesur ve gizemli iddialarına direnmekle birlikte, hocası Heidegger'in görüşlerinden etkilenmiştir. Bu bağlamda, Gadamer her ne kadar "Heideggerci" olarak algılansa da aralarında önemli farklar vardır. Gadamer, düşüncesinde Heidegger gibi kavramdan ziyade sözcüğe önem vermekle birlikte, Heidegger'in Batı metafiziğini yıkmaya katılmaz. Gadamer bu geleneği tamamen yıkmak yerine onun içinden kendi diyalojik modelini oluşturmaya yarayacak kaynaklar bulmaya çalışır (Arthos 2013: 10). İki düşünürün diyaloga bakışları da farklıdır. Diyalog, ilk ya da son sözün olmayışı ve konuşmanın sürekliliği üzerine dayanır. Gadamer hermeneutiğinde diyalojik düşünme önemli bir yer tutar.

Gadamer'in sanatı ve anlamayı birer olay olarak düşünmesi, büyük ölçüde Heidegger'in görüşleri ile uyumludur. Heidegger'e göre, hakikat bir temsil (representation) ya da karşılık gelme (correspondance) değildir. Hakikat sanatta gerçekleşen bir olaydır (*Ereignis*). Hakikat aynı zamanda henüz açığa çıkmamış olanı da kapsar. Hakikat, açıklık ile gizlilik arasındaki çatışmayla ortaya çıkar. Sanat da bu hakikatin cereyan edişi, onun açığa çıkma ve gizlenme ile "oluş" halidir.

Ereignis, Heidegger'in ağırlıklı olarak, 1936 sonrası döneminde geliştirdiği, kendi geç dönem düşüncesinin ana kavramıdır. *Ereignis*, varlıkların kendilerini "ne ise o" olarak göstermesinin en yalın ve zarif yasasıdır. İngilizceye bazen "enowning", "adaptation" ya da "event of appropriation" olarak çevrilse de bu çalışmada *Ereignis* için "olay" (event) karşılığı kullanılmıştır. Heidegger için *Ereignis* varlığı sadece "hazır bulunan" olarak görme anlayışından bir kopuştur. Heidegger, mevcudiyet (presence) yerine mevcuda geliş (presencing) düşüncesini benimser. Bu anlayış, Heidegger'in eski Yunancada hakikat anlamına gelen *aletheia* kavrayışıyla da uyumludur; çünkü *aletheia* hakikatin durağan ve belirlenmiş bir içeriğe karşılık gelen değil sürekli açığa çıkan ve tamamlanmamış yönünü ifade eder.

Ereignis, birbirine sadece "yakın duran" değil, birbirleriyle etkileşim içinde olan öğelerin birliğiyle oluşur. Bu birlik, *Ereignis*'in "kendi gibi olma" ya da aidiyet (enowning) gibi anlamlarını da kapsar. Bu vurgu aynı zamanda Heidegger'in "otantiklik" anlayışıyla uyumludur. Sanatla *Ereignis* arasında güçlü bir bağ vardır. Heidegger, *aletheia*'yı sanatın kaynağı olarak görür. Sanat eseri bir "nesne" değil ontolojik bir yapıdır, bir olaydır. Sanat eserleri sabit değildir, yorumlanmalarındaki açık uçluluk nedeniyle eserler devam etmektedir.

Gadamer'e Göre Anlam ve Anlama Olarak Olay

Gadamer'e göre, anlam bir olaydır, çünkü anlamak önceden var olan bir içeriğin bulunması değildir. Anlam temsil etmez, oluşur. Anlam spekülative bir harekettir, sabit bir olgu değildir. Anlam, dilin dışında bir şeye gönderimde bulunmaz; dil içinde inşa edilir ve hiçbir zaman tamamlanmaz, sürekli devam eden bir süreçtir. Anlam, metodolojik bir etkinlik değildir ve hiç bitmeyen bir yorumlama tutumu içinde sürekli olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Anlamın olay oluşu iki şekilde ifade edilebilir. Hem anlamın

kendisi bir olaydır, hem de anlama süreci bir olaydır. Bu iki yön, birlikte bir bütünlük oluşturur. Anlamlar aynı zamanda bağlamsaldır. Bu nedenle anlam her zaman daha fazlasını içerebilir. Gadamer'e göre, anlamın bağlama bağlı oluşu anlamı çoğaltan bir unsurdur.

Gadamer'in anlamı açıklamada yoruma verdiği değer, her türlü yorumun geçerli olabileceği gibi düşünülebilir. Ancak Gadamer'in vurgusu bu değildir. Öncelikle anlamın yani yorumlanacak eserin kendi içsel tutarlılığı içinde bir yapısının olması (*Gebilde*) gerekir. Gadamer eserin dünya ile ilişkisini oluşturan ve anlam içinde süregelen bir unsuru inkar etmez ve anlamının farklı şekillerde gerçekleşebileceğini öznelliğe bağlamaz. Gadamer için doğru yorum, doğru temsile ulaşmak değildir. Bu daha ziyade esere doğru katılım meselesidir. Yani bir eseri anlama için o eserin anlamını "duymaya açık" bir katılım gerekir (DaVia ve Lynch 2024: 83). Açıklık, Gadamer'in hermeneutiği için temel koşuldur. Gerçek bir açıklıkla yaklaşıldığında eser ile diyalojik bir ilişki başlayabilir. Bu nedenle her yorum aynı değerde olmayacaktır.

Diyalog ve konuşma, Gadamer'de anlamın ve anlamının sürekli hareketini açıklar. Bu süreçler hiçbir zaman tamamlanmaz çünkü her zaman daha fazlası söylenebilir. Gadamer, Platon üzerine kapsamlı çalışmalar yapmıştır ve Gadamer'in diyalog anlayışında Platon'un etkisi bulunmakla beraber, onun anlayışı, nihai bir hakikati aramamasıyla Platon'unkinden farklıdır. Gadamer, Platon'dan farklı olarak olaylar üzerinden düşünür. Ayrıca, Gadamer'in hakikati Platon'dan farklı olarak dilin dışında değil, içindedir (Davey 2021: 69).

Eşzamanlılık (*contemporaneity*) da Gadamer için önemli bir kavramdır. Eşzamanlılık bir eseri geçmişten bugüne uzanan zamansal boyutuyla anlamaya yöneliktir. Bir eserin zaman içindeki farklı sunumları ona farklı anlam olanakları verir. Gadamer, eserin orijinali ya da belirli bir sunuma ayrıcalık tanımaz. "Her tekrar, eserin kendisi kadar özgündür" (Gadamer 1989: 126). Gadamer'in hermeneutiği, yazarın niyetini bağlayıcı bulmaz, bu nedenle onu açığa çıkarmayı amaçlamaz. Eser bir kez yaratıldığında, yazardan bağımsızlaşır ve gelecekteki anlamlarına açılır. Eşzamanlılık, anlamın zaman ve mekân içinde sürekli hareketini yansıtır.

Dil, Gadamer'in düşüncesinin merkezindedir. O, dili bir araç olarak görmez. Dil ontolojik olarak yaşamla ilintilidir. Gadamer'e göre, sözcüğün kendisi bile ontolojik bir olay karakterine sahiptir. Sözcük ile nesne birlikte vardır. Olay olarak anlam, geleneksel temsil ya da gönderim anlayışını aşan bir ontolojik derinliğe sahiptir. Ona göre dil temelde olgusaldır. Dil ile dünya arasındaki bu dinamik ilişki, anlam olayını mümkün kılar. Dil, dünyayı kurar. Bu nedenle Gadamer'in anlama anlayışı da Heidegger'inki gibi bilişsel değil, pratik temellidir. Bu durum, anlam, hakikat ve yaşam arasındaki sürekli oluşan ilişkiyi ifade eder.

Heidegger'in Sanat Anlayışı

Sanata estetik yaklaşım ile ontolojik yaklaşım arasında bir rekabet söz konusudur. Dreyfus, Heidegger'i, sanatı ontolojik bir biçimde tanımlayan ilk filozof olarak değerlendirir (2005: 411). Estetik yaklaşımda sanat eseri duylara göre ve genel olarak güzel olarak değerlendirilir. Bu yaklaşım, öznenin algısına odaklanır ve sanat eserlerini keyif alınacak nesnelere olarak görür. Heidegger, estetik geleneği tercih etmez; çünkü ona göre bu yaklaşımla sanat duyusal algı çerçevesinde kalır ve özne-nesne karşıtlığına dayanır.

Heidegger'e göre sanat, hakikatin tarihsel olarak gerçekleşmesidir, yani *Ereignis* olarak ifade edilen bir olaydır. Sanat, uzaktan algılanacak bir şey değil, katılım gösterilmesi gereken bir şeydir. Heidegger'e göre, hakikat aynı zamanda henüz açığa çıkmamış olanı barındırır. Hakikat, açığa çıkarma ile gizleme arasındaki çatışmayla kendini kurarak ortaya çıkar. Heidegger'e göre sanat, hakikatin eserde yaratıcı biçimde korunmasıdır. O halde sanat, hakikatin oluşu ve gerçekleşmesidir (Heidegger 1971: 69). Heidegger'e göre sanat "hakikatin ışıldamasıdır."

Gadamer'in Sanat Anlayışı

Gadamer'in sanat anlayışı, Heidegger'in görüşlerinin bir devamı olarak görülebilir, ancak kendi özgün yönleri vardır. Gadamer'in sanatın bir olay olarak anlaşılması düşüncesi, Heidegger'in *Ereignis* kavramıyla doğrudan ilişkilidir. Her iki filozof da sanatın bir hakikat olayı olduğunu ve özne-nesne ayrımını aştığını savunur. İkisine

göre de, sanat ontolojik boyutuyla yaşamla doğrudan ilgilidir ve duysal olanın ötesinde hakikatin gerçekleşmesidir.

Gadamer, özellikle Kant'tan sonra sanatın gerçekliğe karşıt bir şey olarak anlaşılmaya başlandığını belirtir. Ona göre, Kant, estetiği “çıkar gözetmeyen hazzı” (disinterested pleasure) odaklanmasıyla sanatı öznel hale getirmektedir. Gadamer'e göre sanatı öznel bir deneyim olarak algılamak onun hakikat boyutunu göz ardı eder. Sanat sadece estetik bir fenomen değildir. Gadamer, Heidegger ile birlikte estetik anlayıştan uzaklaşarak, sanata ontolojik bir yön kazandırır.

Gadamer'e göre, “estetik bilinç” yetersiz bir yaklaşımdır. Sanat, yaşamın parçası olan bir olaydır. Sanat deneyiminde (*Erfahrung*) özne ve nesne birbirlerinden ayrık ve uzak varlıklar olarak kalmaz; birbirlerine katılarak, yaşamı dönüştüren bir ilişki kurarlar. Gadamer, estetik ile hermeneutiği ontolojik derinlikte ilişkilendirir. Kendi ünlü ifadesiyle: “Estetik, hermeneutiğin içine alınmalıdır” (Gadamer 1989: 164). Gadamer'in hermeneutik estetiği, sanatı yaşamdan ayıran anlayışı reddeder. Sanat eserleri her zaman yeni anlamların ortaya çıkışına olanak vermesiyle yaşamı oluşturur ve dönüştürür. Gadamer'in sanat anlayışı oyun, sembol ve festival kavramları etrafında şekillenir.

Gadamer'e göre, “oyun” sanat eserinin varoluş tarzıdır. Oyun, sanatın dinamik ontolojisini ve özerk yapısını gösterir. Oyunda önemli olan, oyuncular ya da izleyiciler değil, oyunun “arada” gerçekleşen halidir. Oyun, bireylerin öznel davranışlarından farklıdır. Oyunun kendi özerkliği ve idealite'si vardır. Oyunun kendi dünyası ve kendi ölçüsü vardır. Oyun ciddi bir olaydır. Oyunlar, dönüştürülmüş dünyalarda gerçekleşir ve dönüştürücüdür. Gadamer'in oyun anlayışı sıradan ya da çocuk oyunlarından farklıdır; seyirciye hitap eder ve bir iddia taşır. Buradaki oyun, eğlenceye pasif bir biçimde maruz kalmak değil, aktif katılım gerektiren bir olaydır. Oyun, yeni olasılıklara açıklığı ifade eder. Bu da özgürlük düşüncesini çağırır. Oyunlar açık uçludur, nasıl biteceği bilinmez.

Sanat, oyun olarak her oynandığında, her bir sunumunda yeniden gerçekleşen bir olaydır. Sunum aynı zamanda katılım çağrısıdır, çünkü izlenme beklentisini belirtir. Bu yüzden, sanatın oyunu iletişimsel bir boyut taşır. Gadamer, sanat ile yaşamı

birbirine bağlayan bir oyun ontolojisi savunur. Hem oyun, hem sanat, kendinde içlerinde amaçtır, başka bir şeyi amaçlamazlar. Oyun olarak sanat, amaçsız bir rasyonelliğe sahiptir. Amaçsızlık ona özgürlük kazandırır, rasyonelliği ise onun idealitesini açıklar. Oyun aynı zamanda, sanat eserini evrensel kavramlardan ve sanat tarihi dönemlerinden özgürleştirir.

Gadamer, sanatın zamanla ilişkisini “festival” kavramıyla ilişkilendirir. Festivalin kendine özgü zamanına göre, “[y]eniden kutlanan festival, ne başka bir festivaldir ne de ilkinin yalnızca bir hatırasıdır” (Gadamer 1989: 126). Festivalin zamanı insanları işbölümüyle ayıran ve ölçülebilen çalışma zamanından farklıdır. Festival, yalnızca kendine özgü bir zamansallık olarak değil, aynı zamanda ifade ettiği topluluk, ortaklık ve paylaşım deneyimi anlamında da sanatla ilişkilidir. Festivaller herkes içindir ve insanları bir araya getirir. Gadamer, festivallerin kutlandığını vurgular.

Gadamer, festivale değinirken onun her seferinde yeniden gerçekleştirildiğine dikkat çeker. Örneğin bir senfoni kendi bütünselliğini ifade eden ve onun her sefer aynı eser olarak algılanmasına olanak veren idealitesine rağmen, her seferinde yeniden icra edilir. Sanat eserinin, organik bütünlüğü olan bir canlı gibi, kendine özgü bir zamansal yapısı vardır. Festivalin olay yönünü de belirleyen bu özerk zaman, geçmiş ile şimdiyi birçok biçimde bir araya getirir. Hatırlama eyleminde, geçmiş ve şimdi bir olur. Bu benzersiz zamansallık izleyicinin de katılımını içerir. Bu, sanat eserlerinin birer olay oluşunu destekleyen bir zamansızlıktır. Sanat durağan değildir, her zaman bir oluş halindedir.

Sembol, Gadamer’in sanatı açıklamak için kullandığı kavramlar arasındadır. Gadamer sembolün alegoriden farkı üzerinde durur. Alegori net olarak tanımlanmış ve birebir karşılık gelen bir anlam ilişkisini belirtir. Sembolde ise anlam alegorideki gibi birebir karşılık gelmez, bu nedenle deşifre edilmesi söz konusu değildir. Sembolün taşıdığı anlam daha parçalı, dolayısıyla daha açık uçludur. Sembolde karşılık gelme yerine; tanıma / fark etme (recognition), çağrışımlar ve ilişki kurmak söz konusudur.

Sembolün kökeninde, Antik Yunan kültüründeki “anımsatma simgesi” bulunur. Geleneğe göre ev sahipleri, bir nesneyi ikiye bölerek bir parçasını tesseră hospitalis

adı altında konuğuna verir, diğer yarısını ise kendi saklardı. Uzun yıllar sonra, o konuğun soyundan biri evine gelir ve o nesnenin iki parçası tekrar birleşirse karşılıklı olarak bir “tanıma” (recognition) eylemi gerçekleşirdi. Bu gelenek, sembolün, eksik bir parçadan yola çıkarak daha bütünsel bir tanımaya yol açma yönünü vurgular (Gadamer 1986: 31). Bir şeyi fark etme o şeyi aynen olduğu gibi yeniden görmek değildir. Bir şeyi fark ettiğimizde aslında onu yeni bir yönüyle “fark” ediyoruzdur; yani onu önceden bildiğimiz halinden daha farklı haliyle, daha derinlemesine tanıyoruzdur. Bir sembol üzerinden bir şeyleri fark ettiğimizde zihnimize mevcut olan bir anlam ilişkisini tekrar etmeyiz. Yeni bir anlam deneyimi ya da olayı yaşarız.

Yorum ve Karşılaşma Olayı

Gadamer, Heidegger gibi anlamanın sonlu olduğunu düşünür. İnsan anlamasının sonlu olması, onun sonsuz bir anlamanın eksik bir biçimi olduğu anlamına gelmez. Anlamanın özü itibarıyla sınırlı olması mutlak, sonsuz bir anlamanın mümkün olmayışı ile ilgilidir. Anlama sonludur çünkü çok sayıda anlama olasılığı içinden birinin benimsenmesi diğerlerini dışlar. Ayrıca anlamda her zaman bağlam söz konusudur. Bu nedenle, anlama bir olaydır. Bu da sanatın anlaşılmasının neden her zaman bir olay olduğunu açıklar.

Gadamer’e göre sanat deneyimi, bir öznenin bir sanat nesnesini deneyimlemesi değildir. Her karşılaşmada farklı bir şekilde olup bitendir. Ona göre, “sanat eserleri yoruma bağlıdır ve bu anlamda tamamlanmamış nesnelere” (Gabriel 2021: 33). Sanat eserleri, her bir yorumu ve her bir sunumunda ayrı birer olaydır, çünkü yorum ve sunumda özgürlük unsuru bulunur. Sanat eserleri yalıtılmış varlıklar değildir, onlar deneyimlerinin içinde oluşur. Bu anlamda içlerinde bulunan belirsizlikle geçmişten gelerek, geleceğe yönelirler.

Daniel Barenboim’un bir müzik eserinin hakikati hakkında söyledikleri, Gadamer’in görüşünü örnekler niteliktedir. Barenboim, notalarının insanların düşündüğünden daha fazla yoruma açık olduğunu ifade eder, ona göre, “nota, hakikat değildir. Nota, eserin kendisi değildir. Eser, onu gerçekten sese dönüştürdüğünüzde ortaya çıkar” (Barenboim ve Said 2003: 33). Ayrıca, bir müzik eserinin her icrası, aynı orkestra tarafından yapılsa bile, farklı ve tekrarlanamaz bir olaydır. Bu nedenle, bir müzik

partisyonu, hem yorum, hem de sunum açısından büyük bir çeşitlilik barındırır. Geçişken (transitory) bir sanat olarak müziğin olay yönü belirgindir. Ancak şunu da unutmamak gerekir ki, diğer sanat dalları için de benzer bir durum söz konusudur; çünkü sunum (presentation) ve yorum (interpretation), tüm sanat formlarına ontolojik olarak içkindir. Zira Gadamer'e göre sanat, temsil etmez; sunum yapar. Sanat eseri, her karşılaşmada yeniden oluşur. Bir sanat eserinin her yorumu, o esere katkıda bulunur. Sanat eseri, yorumlarının karmaşık tarihsel süreci boyunca uzanır.

Gadamer'e göre, dil yaşama öyle içkindir ki, Gadamer, insanı konuşma olarak tanımlar. Bu, onun ontolojik dil anlayışını ve diyalog merkezli düşüncesini yansıtır. Ona göre konuşma, yaptığımız bir şey değil, bizatihi olduğumuz şeydir. Konuşma aynı zamanda dönüştürücü bir güce sahiptir ve kendi "dehası" vardır; çünkü kendiliğinden ortaya çıkar, bir kurala bağlı değildir. Düşünmeyi konuşma olarak ele almak, onu kontrol arayışından uzaklaştırır, düşünsel harekete vurgu yapar. Dil spekülatifir çünkü sonsuz imkân barındırır. Gadamer'in hermeneutiğinde kelimelerin kendi hakikati söz konusudur. Bu bağlamda Gadamer'in hermeneutiği, 19. yüzyılın bilgi odaklı veya bilişsel hermeneutik anlayışından farklıdır.

Anlama aynı zamanda diyalojiktir. Gadamer'in iyi bilinen "ufukların kaynaşması" (fusion of horizons) diyaloga dayalı anlama olayını belirtir. Gadamer'in "ufuk" anlayışı, ufukun günlük dildeki çağrışımı gibi bir sınır vurgusu içermez. Gadamer için ufuk genişleyebilir bir alandır. Ufukların kaynaşması kavramı, yazarın niyetine öncelik tanımaz; çünkü yazarın ufku, kaynaşan birçok ufuktan sadece biridir. Ufukların kaynaşması, bilginin pratik uygulamasıyla ilgilidir ve gelenek ile önyargıya da bir rol atfeder.

Gadamer'in hermeneutiğinde sanat eserleri özel bir önem taşır, çünkü eserler kendi duruşlarına sahiptir ve her zaman anlam fazlası taşırlar. Gadamer, sanat eserinin bize bir iddiada bulunduğunu söyler. Bu, eserin bir şey temsil etmeden, kendini sunmasıyla ilintilidir. Bu nedenle, sanat eseriyle bir "ben-sen ilişkisi" kurulabilir. Eseri "sen" olarak görerek onunla diyaloga girmek, onla karşılaşmak anlamına gelir. Eser bize bir "sen" gibi görüldüğünde, bir talepte bulunur, bu nedenle karşılaşma diyalojik modda

gerçekleşir. Böyle bir ilişki ve karşılaşma ancak açıklık ile mümkündür. Soru sormak kendi bilmeyişini kabul etmektir ve böyle bir açıklığı mümkün kılar.

Gadamer'in hermeneutik felsefesi, sanatla karşılaşma ve eser üzerinde oyalanma kavramlarına özel bir vurgu yapar. Karşılaşmalar sanat olayıdır, çünkü tanıdık olanı sarsar ve şaşırtır. Gerçek bir karşılaşma ancak yabancı olana açıklık ile mümkündür. Karşılaşma, anlamın ortaya çıktığı bir olaydır; çünkü aynı zamanda kendimizle karşılaşmadır. Bu, yaşamsal etkileri olan güçlü bir olaydır. Sanatla karşılaşmak, eserin özerk zamanına girmek ve bu zamanı kendine mâl etmektir. Eser üzerinde geçirilen zaman sanatla karşılaşmanın önemli bir yönüdür; çünkü oyalanma, karşılaşmayı yoğunlaştırır ve onu bir olay hâline getirir.

Karşılaşmaların gücü yeni ve bilinmeyene açık olunmasından ve uzun süren bir düşünsel diyalogu tetiklemelerinden gelir. Gadamer Kübizmi, 19. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında doğrusal perspektifin çöküşüyle başlayan değişimin bir adımı olarak görür. Kübizmi doğuran eserlerden belki de en belirgin olan Picasso'nun *Avignon'lu Kızlar* adlı yapıtı sanat tarihinde çok tartışma yaratmış ve sanatta köklü dönüşümleri başlatmış bir tablodur. Bu eserin yarattığı şok ve karşılaşma etkisi Gadamer'in kullandığı kavramlara güzel bir örnek sunar. Sanatın şok etme gücü vardır; çünkü sanat öngörülemez ve beklentilerle deneyimlenemez. Bu nedenle sanat bir olay olarak gerçekleşir.

Picasso, Mısır, Güney Asya, İberya Sanatları ve Barok Döneminin yanı sıra, Cézanne, El Greco, Velazquez, Gauguin, Manet ve Degas'dan etkiler taşıyan bu tabloya, yaşadığı pek çok karşılaşmayı kendine mal ederek (enown), altı aydan uzun bir süre boyunca, yüzlerce eskiz, çizim ve resim yaparak hazırlanmıştır. Batı sanatındaki üç boyut etkisi, perspektif, zaman ve mekân birliği, üslup tutarlılığı, güzellik anlayışı gibi pek çok normu kıran bu resmin yapılmasında, Picasso'nun daha önceden gördüğü hiçbir şeye benzemeyen Afrika Sanatı ile karşılaşması ise özellikle etkili olmuştur. Çok yoğun karşılaşmalar sonucunda yapılabilen böyle bir resmin döneminin ilerici sanatçıları ile bile karşılaşma süreci tartışmalı, yoğun ve zorlayıcı olmuş; yıllarca sürmüştür.

Bir Kübist resmi ya da soyut bir tabloyu bir bakışta, pasif bir gözlemlerle göremeyiz. Tuval üzerinde beliren çeşitli düzlemleri sentezlemek için kendi etkin katılımızı

sunmalı ve çaba göstermeliyiz (Gadamer 1987: 8). *Avignon'lu Kızlar* gibi bakması rahatsız edici ama gözümüzü alamadığınız eserler bizden dikkat etmemizi, kendi üzerlerinde vakit geçirmemizi ister, bizi kendi sanat olaylarına çağırırlar. Sanatla karşılaşma bir rahatsızlıkla ya da bir yabancılik unsurunu anlama çabasında ortaya çıkar. Kübizm geleneği kıran bir kopuş niteliğindedir ve sanatın kendilik anlayışı ile resmin bir “manzara” olduğu algısını değiştirir (Gadamer 1987: 7-8). Bu kopuş, anlamının doğasına bir meydan okumadır ve felsefi hermeneutiği çağırın bir durumdur, çünkü bu tür bir eseri nasıl anlayacağımız belirsizdir. Böyle karşılaşmalar bize anlama olayları yaşatır.

Sanat eseri, yaratıcısının niyetini aşan kendi bağımsızlığına sahiptir. Gadamer'e göre eser yalnızca geçmişten gelen bir ses olarak konuşmaz; aynı zamanda, bu bağımsızlık sayesinde yeniden ve şimdiye hitap ederek konuşur. Bu nedenle, her karşılaşma farklı bir olaydır, çünkü sanat eseri her defasında eşzamanlılığı ile yeniden var olur.

Sanatın Gadamer için bu kadar önemli bir konu olmasının bir nedeni, onun temsili hakikati aşma kapasitesidir. Sanatın kendi hakikati ve dönüştürücü gücü vardır. Sanatı anlamak bir olaydır, çünkü anlamın hareketini sağlayan unsurları içerir. D. H. Lawrence'a göre, “Cézanne, elmayı en iyi anlayan kişidir; çünkü bize elmanın ‘elmalığını’ göstermiştir” (Deleuze 1981). Picasso'ya göre ise Matisse öldüğünde, rengi gerçekten anlayan tek ressam olarak Chagall kalacaktır. Bu sözler Gadamer'in belirttiği gibi sanatta anlamının hiçbir zaman tamamlanmayan uzun yolunu vurgular.

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