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## Critical Discourse on Art in H. G. Gadamer's Opinion

**Abstract:** Understanding a work of art implies, in the hermeneutical vision of H. G. Gadamer, a spiritual consubstantiality with the artist, an emotional and meditative joining with the dimension of his individuality. To remain strictly objective in front of the creative aesthetic procedure means you fall outside its supreme meanings, it means the exile outside the profound message of an artistic creation. Thus, the critical discourse on art may not be well founded than inside it, gravitating round the act of empathizing with the artist's experience, an artist who is always a pilgrim on the roads leading him towards the ideal of the beauty.

**Keywords:** work of art, critical discourse, celebration, empathy, beauty, spatio-temporal suspension, aesthetic co-participation.

The harmonic ideal of beauty seems to represent, for all ages of human development, the fundamental bench whose touch was assumed as a primordial mission by the phenomenality and the creative dynamics of the artistic procedure. The work of art can be analysed in the complexity of its endless aesthetic and metaphysical valences not only from the artist's paradigm, but also from the point of view of the one who contemplates it, the latter being included in the open flow through the exposure and the aesthetic appeal of the work concerned. On this perspective and on the opportunities for such a positioning to become a *critical discourse about art* also concentrates the analytical procedure developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer in one of its works of reference, the study *The Actuality of the Beauty*. Gadamer's metaphysical perspective of the art phenomenon shows, during the development of researches in this study, the location of the aesthetics' fundamentals in the dialectics of the human interrelations, dialectics that finds its most revealing manner of materialization in the reality of the celebration. Thus, the German thinker tries a thorough understanding of art from a prior research pointing the charismatic presence of the celebration procedure throughout the whole human history. The attempt to avoid the dreadful spectre of terrifying loneliness imposed to the human being the

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development and the taking over of acts of communion over the simple social association. It would be possible that the feeling of loneliness may not have known the maximum reduction through the simple existence in common. Thus, the construction of the procedure of *celebration with the others* has established itself as a viable solution to the human loneliness crises, as a superior reply given to the anxiety generated by the isolation and by the idea of a possible abandonment of the human being in the infinity of a glacial cosmos. The common element that seems to characterize any experience of human celebration, regardless of time and location, seems to be, in Gadamer's opinion, the rejection of any type of closing and exile for an individual against the other individual. Therefore, the celebration can be understood as an overflow of the alterity's manifestations. No matter what is celebrated, what is evoked and always relived in the act of celebration, what is really important is the fact that the presence of the dynamism of the alterity, of the interrelation imposes itself as an unavoidable constant. The celebration carries with it an obligation to inter-connection with the others, and, unlike the cohabitation, it seeks for *a common empathy*, in order to commonly experience the most intense emotional and mental processes. Thus, those who are celebrating are not only living in a community, but they also assume an exuberance of a common moment of ecstatic uplift. The other participants in the celebration are more than just co-inhabitants of an amorphous *topos*. They are caught in a fraternity of spiritual ecstasy. Gadamer tells us that the celebration represents the communion in its full shape. It is calling on all persons, and addresses to all those who walk in the dimension of its spiritual attitudes. Anyone who does not take part in the celebration, anyone who refuses it, turning his face away from its call, becomes an excluded one, an uncomprehending one, an ignorant in relation to the experience given by the act of the celebration (Gadamer, 2000, 110). Of course, there are other human activities which cannot be realized otherwise than by gathering people. Thus, hunting, agriculture or industrial production would be impossible without the presence organized into crowds, groups of several people. But Gadamer senses that, in these examples, people are individualized, separated by their statute and their mission in the framework of such occupations. They work together but are spiritually separated, closed one in relation to each other, each one being concerned only of his way and of his mission, by the task that must be carried out in the work and in the effort in question which he has assumed as an individual task seated next to other individual tasks. The celebration act imposes, on the contrary, the stopping of day-to-day activities, the cutting-off of the mundane rhythmic effort. Together with this stopping for celebrating, the gathering of people acquires a superior valence, which means an internal opening of each one to the other and in particular of each other towards a common point, namely to what should be celebrated.

During the procedure of the celebration, we are not separated anymore from each other, but we are at the level of an emotional co-substantiality, becoming a common part of a single stream of spiritual ascendancy (ibidem, 114).

Inside a metaphysical and hermeneutical perspective, H. G. Gadamer will indicate that there is a connection between the procedure of the celebration and the artistic act. More precisely, we are talking about a vision of the two, for which it finds a common binder. Thus, the celebration can be regarded as an art, as an artistic manifestation and, in its turn, the art can be received as a high celebration of the spirit. For Gadamer, most forms of manifestation of celebration are artistic. They include habits, traditions and *festival orations* which are anchored in the sap of the art. The German thinker will evoke here that, often, these speeches may be exceeded in meaning and emotional impact by the *celebration silence*. The special silence is easily noticed, in particular, in the case of the impact of our perception of the artwork. When we are surprised, amazed by the magnificence, by the harmonic beauty which postulates in front of us, in the opening of the presence of consciousness which defines us in the form of the artwork, our spirit is celebrating, it is celebrating alongside with the others the meeting with the transcendence of the sublime. Such a meeting could induce the feeling of a spatio-temporal suspension, of an evasion from the paradigm of the daily life towards altitudes that are non-reachable in the absence of art. Here, *the silence* imposes itself as a unique status of response, of reply to the call and the location in the foreground of the artwork that is meeting and assimilating the admirer's consciousness. Gadamer will ask himself, however, if this silence is a common silence or if we are witnessing a particular type of discursive introspection, to an original critical discourse on aesthetics. Does such a silence not say more than any shouting? Does it not talk more intensely about the artwork that is exposed; does it not express ideas and analyses more deeply than the saying of oratorical guidance? If the celebration of the art constitutes a loss of consciousness in the mirage of beauty, the silence enveloping the contemplator's fascinated face does not render a critical message much more eloquent about that proper work of art than the simple vociferation of a presentation which wants to be relevant? If for the German thinker, many of the celebration forms may be perceived as artistic manifestations and certain creational artistic presences can be thought out and assumed as reasons of celebration, and more specifically, as sources of spiritual celebration, then each participant in communion at the celebration of art lives this experience like any important celebration and one of the primordial features of the real participation to a celebration is *the integration* in its time and space. The phenomenon on the integration in the spiritual harmony can get, at the level of the aesthetic experience, the connotation of

a *re-integration*. Thus, the contemplator of an artwork is often hit by an exuberant state of mind which brings him back to an Edenic area of the spirit, area which he forgot, as captivated by the everyday world. The escape through contemplation of an artwork from the profane field looks like the split with the anchorages in materiality evoked by the ancient mythology that saw in the earthly existence a damnation (Eliade, 1993, 43). *The time of art*, evoked by Gadamer, looks like, from this perspective, the sacred time often evoked by Mircea Eliade. Thus, the meeting with the artwork also represents the opportunity of a grandiose interior release, the acquisition of this ecstatic freedom being celebrated by the contemplator's consciousness. Also, this temporality attributed to the art may be also compared to the special time of the *Utopia* which Henri Bergson understood as an agglomeration, an intense mixing of the past, present and future (Bergson, 1998,136-137), in essence these three dimensions being exceeded and suspended by a fourth dimension, the special time of the artwork.

Therefore, in the aesthetic experience of assuming a work of art, the normal time and space are abandoned by the human conscience in the projection towards a new spatio-temporal framework, where every moment is lived much more intensely holding a degree, an increased level of energy and eidetic intensity. The admirers who station thoughtfully in front of a work of art become the witnesses of their own skip over the everyday banality towards the openings of the transcendence. This leap is a celebration of an aesthetic order which does not dissociate, does not disintegrate at different moments and does not differ from a contemplator to another. Although that work of art is perceived by each one in his/her own way, however all these members of the aesthetic celebration form a common body, a unit of immersion and assumption of the beauty displayed here. They are similar to the public of a concert who is also feeling the music as a whole, as an indivisible flow which calls up a consistent crowd, a homogeneous group, stimulated and released towards the ascendancy of the spirituality opened through art (Gadamer, 2000, 112).

In Gadamer's vision, *the art as celebration of the human spirit* is exposing itself through artistic works in front of the contemplator as a whole, a nucleus which shows itself as stable, imperturbable, without modulations and segmentations. Like an organic being, the artistic phenomenon touches and envelops unitary the human consciousness, brightening it and giving it high prospects on its own existential meaning. Through art, the human rediscovers the deepness of his soul, the forgotten abyss of his telluric inner self. The contact with the work of art is the meeting with a self-contained unit that gravitates round its own structure of metaphysical meanings and tensions. For Gadamer, the work of art is like *an organic unit*, in the sense of an elaboration bearing the signs of spiritual life of the creator artist (Ibidem, 114). By encountering the work of art, we encounter the spectrum of its

creator and we dialogize with his artistic vision, assuming not only the aesthetic message, but also the time of that artwork. Listening to a music part, we integrate to its tempo, reading a poem we anchor the aesthetic perception of its tone, of its tact, getting through a temple or another magnificent building we will relive that past time in which have been constructed these buildings. In essence, any genuine reception of a work of art requires, from the German thinker's point of view, an acceptance and a receipt in our sensitivity of the universe of that work as a spherical unmodifiable unit, always exposed to new interpretations (Ibidem, 116). Thus, for an authentic contemplator, a work of art must be in possession of his/her conscience, for being partially but actually understood. That *silence*, evoked by Gadamer, that needs to happen when in front of an important work of art is therefore an *internalized critical discourse*, an analytical discourse oriented towards the inner of the conscience in the research of the work of art. Such an internalized discourse implies, Gadamer says, a co-participation of the one who admires it to the demiurgical effort of the creator. Contemplating or listening to a work of art, the admirer experiences a sensation of meeting not only the other admirers but also the artist in the sense of experiencing of the edification of the respective work. He has a feeling that he himself has painted the canvas, that he writes the music part or the poem, that he builds the temple with the painter, composer, poet or architect and the manufacturer. His critical discourse on the work of art comes to accompany the creator thought of the artist, it occurs on the position of *co-participation* to the aesthetic demiurgical act. Outside of this attitude of co-work together with the artist, any analytics drafted, any discourse that is supposed to be critical on the aesthetic phenomena can be easily a surface structure, irrelevant to identify and highlight the deep meaning of a work of art. In H. G. Gadamer's vision, a critical discourse on the artistic phenomenon must appear from the soil of the *empathy* with the creator artist, from the tensions of a setting on the place and the ontic, affective and mental position of that artist. Without attempting re-living his emotional tension and re-meditating on the themes that have marked him, it is impossible to develop an actual analytical vision on the creation in which the artist has fully invested and expressed himself. Empathizing with that creator of the artwork essentially means recalibrating the rhythm of your own consciousness to the level of the spatio-temporal dimension indicated by that creation. That meta-time in which are agglomerated in a crepuscular uniformity the present, the past and the future, that meta-space in which are merging the real and the possible locations under the sign of a unitary and lonely place encircles and carries off the sensible and aesthetic internality of the contemplator (Gadamer, 2001, 102). It is only on the positions of the experience of this carrying off that the contemplator of art may establish a real critical discourse, a genuine analytics on the artistic creation that

exposes itself; it is placed in the foreground and in the inquiring opening. Gadamer will accentuate here the idea of the understanding of the phenomenon of art by the approach of the creator aesthetic procedure to the contemplator's subjectivity. It resumes, in a hermeneutical context, the Kantian thesis that interprets the presence of beauty as *finality without purpose* in the sense of a subjective investment of the beauty, in the sense to understand all the generations of beauty as reasonable appearances in our interior structure, in the aesthetic sensitivity of our inner self (Kant, 1995, 39).

At this point, we encounter dialectic, a circular flow in which the work of art is appealing the contemplator's consciousness only in so far as this one is mirrored, recovers its ideals of beauty and harmony in the dimension of that work. We can say, at the interpretative limit, that outside this telluric connexion which H. G. Gadamer sees in the act of co-working, meditative and emotional gathering between the contemplator and the creator, it is impossible to effectuate a profound aesthetic analytics, to develop a research that offers truths and that is not only searching for them. In this way, the discourse on the work of art can only be performed on the inside of the dimension opened by it, the subjective factor being invested, in this context, with more importance than the objective one, the latter only noting the presence of the artistic side, without really getting thoroughly into it. Only in such a situation the art will be perceived as the high celebration of the spirit.

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