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ART AND AESTHETICS: PATHWAYS AND REFLECTIONS

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Abstract: The interest of this study is to present the movements that occurred in art, mainly on aesthetics. Its main objective is to reflect on the theory of aesthetics and its trajectory, mainly from the 18th century to the present day. To reach the objective of this study, the methodological procedures used are based on surveys of information through books on the subject, institutions in the area and bibliographic research. The result reveals that art, the object of aesthetics, has its origins in Prehistory, but the first reflections that gave rise to what we know as aesthetics date back to Ancient Greece. However, it was only in the 18th century that aesthetics acquired autonomy as a philosophical area. We can say that the consolidation of aesthetics established by Alexander Baumgarten as a philosophical discipline was a great advance for philosophy. Although, these were moments marked by profound changes in the social, political and economic scope in this new era of bourgeois dominance, as well as in the scope of knowledge, in which aesthetics, in all its precepts, can be considered a precondition for humanity to can go towards freedom.

Keywords: Aesthetics; Art; Philosophy of Art.

INTRODUCTION

“Art is a powerful form of human expression.” Only human beings express themselves through art. Beliefs, convictions, positions and ideologies become visible through the art object. Remembering that art contributes to the establishment of awareness and opinion, but it is also capable of clouding minds and nullifying points of view (SOUZA, 2016, p. 10).

Art, through its representations, seeks to understand the characteristics of a moment in society. It is a form of social manifestation. The artist uses the work to report his moment (BAIERSDORF; WANDSCHEER, 2011).

To study art is to embark on the variation

of time and the various human cultures. “The sociological incursion into the artistic field is always covered with strong difficulties, both related to the intelligibility that can be removed, for example, from works of art, and to the multiple axes of (possible) analysis” (AGUIAR; BASTOS, 2013, p. 181). Formulating a concept for art, which is definitive, is something unrealizable.

However, it has been a “**crusade**” for scholars, critics and philosophers, throughout human history, to try to understand art and what it is (SOUZA, 2016).

According to Souza (2016, p. 11), art deals with an intuitive knowledge of the reality in which we are inserted, with art objects being objects of social culture, which testify and record the history built by man. “The whole plurality of reality can be an object of art. “‘To read’ a work of art is to recognize the world in a certain time and period”.

In the view of Philosophy, we can speak of two great moments of art theorization. In the first, inaugurated by Plato and Aristotle, Philosophy refers to the arts in the form of poetry; already, in the second, from the 18th century, in the form of aesthetics (CHAUÍ, 2012).

Taking into account the moments of art theorization Our interest is to reflect on the movements that occurred in art, mainly on aesthetics, and answer some questions, such as – what was the point of consolidating the aesthetics established by Alexander Baumgarten? Can it be said that aesthetics frees humanity?

In this sense, the objective of this study is to reflect on the theory of aesthetics and its trajectory, mainly from the 19th century onwards. XVIII to the present.

To reach the objective of this study, the methodological procedures used are based on surveys of information through books on the subject, institutions in the area and

bibliographic research.

PATHS AND REFLECTIONS OF AESTHETICS

Art, the object of aesthetics, has its origins in Prehistory, but the first philosophical reflections on art, which gave rise to what we know as aesthetics, date back to Ancient Greece. The first great philosophical treatise on aesthetics and art was written in the 4th century BC. by Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC). The “Poetics”, considered by specialists the first writing destined to the study of art and literature, determined the notions of mimesis (imitation) and catharsis (expiation, purification), and was opposed to the thoughts of Plato, his master (SOUZA, 2016).

But it is in the Renaissance, under the humanist philosophy, that a new concept of aesthetics emerged that considered man as a creator, propagating the concept of art as an imitation of reality. With this, beauty becomes identified and detached from nature by the artist, and art becomes the representation of the beauty of divine creation (SOUZA, 2016).

It is from the 18th century onwards that the relationship between aesthetics and art was strategically established, in a period marked by increasing rationalization, secularization and demystification of the social, political and economic environment in this new era of bourgeois dominance (RODRIGUES, 2008). That is, in antiquity, aesthetics was already part of the other areas of philosophy, but it only acquired autonomy as a philosophical area in the eighteenth century, with Alexander Baumgarten (1714 – 1762), when he published the work *Aesthetica*. It was the first time that the word aesthetics designated the science that discusses sensory knowledge that appropriates beauty and is expressed in art images, as opposed to reason as a science of cognitive knowledge (SOUZA, 2016).

This way, the work *Aesthetica* contributed

to this ancient area of philosophy gaining autonomy. It is necessary to remember that the constitution of a philosophical discipline whose identity is presented by the discourse on art, was historically linked with the intention of creating for it a sphere protected from incursions alien to the artistic (RODRIGUES, 2008).

Aesthetics as an autonomous discipline presupposes, therefore, the way of philosophizing that consists of analyzing our representations of things, not the things themselves. At the same time, the spectrum of possible types of representation is greatly expanded, to the point that the differences between them are the object of constant concern for philosophers. From a historical point of view, the Leibnizian distinction between the clarity and distinctness of a representation was crucial for Aesthetics: sensitive representations may not be distinct, but they can be clear. Alexander Baumgarten turned this distinction into the cornerstone of his Aesthetics. For Baumgarten, the *discernment* seeks, in the face of a representation of a singular object, its “distinctive marks”, retaining them and using them to distinguish it from other objects. Representations “distinct, complete, adequate, and profound, in all degrees, are not sensible”; they are concepts (DRUCKER, 2009, p. 22).

While in the conception of Chauí (2012), the notion of aesthetics, when formulated and developed in the 18th and 19th centuries, presupposed:

1. That art is the product of the artist's sensitivity, imagination and inspiration and that its purpose is contemplation;
2. That contemplation, on the artist's side, is the search for the beautiful (and not the useful, nor the pleasant or pleasurable) and, on the public's side, it is the evaluation or judgment of the value of beauty achieved by the work;
3. That the beautiful is different from the

true.

For Eagleton (1993), aesthetics was born from the recognition that the world of perception and experience cannot only be derived from abstract universal laws, but requires its most appropriate discourse and manifests, albeit inferior, its own internal logic. What develops in the eighteenth century as the strange new discourse of aesthetics is not a challenge to political authority; but it can be understood as symptomatic of the ideological dilemma that is part of absolutist power.

Since its creation, aesthetics has taught us that the work of art has the highest moral and philosophical values of culture. Being founded autonomously, it would carry its purpose in itself, thus protecting itself from the dangerous influences that emanate from the kingdom where useful laws, affections, political disputes and worldly interests prevail (RODRIGUES, 2008).

In this sense, aesthetics rationally shows the human capacity to judge the beautiful and the ugly, as well as the range of feelings that invade us when we exercise this capacity in front of something. Thus employing, in our daily lives, in informal language, the term aesthetic to allude to the appearance of things (SOUZA, 2016).

Still on the foundation of the aesthetic discipline, according to Kirchof (2012), it can be said that Baumgarten, in his approach to the dualism between logical knowledge and aesthetic knowledge, makes it possible to overcome the conception that only logical knowledge belongs to the domain of philosophy. Which proves the creation of a new philosophical discipline, which aims to give a philosophical treatment to sensible representation. This project being carried out based on three main steps: a) the division of logical and aesthetic knowledge from the superior and inferior faculties; b) the connection of the inferior faculties to the fields

of poetics and rhetoric; c) the establishment of a relationship of analogy between reason (higher faculties) and the senses (lower faculties), based on the criteria adopted for the acquisition of aesthetic perfection.

The consolidation of aesthetics in the Enlightenment has a reason for being. Subjectivity and autonomy are the basis of this project, which believes that man has total control over reality, with reason as the driver of this process. With this, there is a great change in the habits and customs of the time. The emancipation of the subject that happens in aesthetics from reason and experience and is the synthesis of the two great philosophical movements of the 18th century: rationalism and empiricism (FURTADO, 2009).

Since the Renaissance, art, beauty, aesthetic values have acquired a value, a dignity, a new social importance, as witnessed by urban planning, architecture, gardens, furniture, works of crystal and china, the nude in painting and sculpture, the ideals of harmony and proportion. Having a taste for art and a desire to stylize the living environment, which function as a means of social self-affirmation, exhibition and prestige of the powerful (LIPOVETSKY; SERROY, 2015).

In the Baumgartenian conception, for works of art to acquire philosophical value, they need to follow rigid criteria of order, unity, adequacy, in terms of presentation, and as long as they fit practical, constantly utilitarian purposes, such as providing data regarding historical events, convey values of dignity, sublimity and morality, among others (KIRCHOF, 2012).

In this sense, if the artistic production carried out in the 18th century sought to follow such precepts, being more or less rigid, the history of art in the following centuries has shown an increasingly growing irreverence in relation to the censorship carried out by philosophical systems and normative theories

(KIRCHOF, 2012).

For Lipovetsky; Serroy (2015), always, even in “primitive” societies, men produced a large amount of aesthetic phenomena such as accessories, body painting, sculpted objects, masks, hairstyles, music, dances, parties, games, etc. There is no society that is not interested, in one way or another, in a work of stylization or “artealization” of the world, which “singularizes an era or a society”, effecting the humanization and socialization of senses and tastes.

“The domain of aesthetics was constituted over at least three centuries, from the beginning of the Renaissance, to be finally consolidated in the romantic generation after Kant, between the end of the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th” (RODRIGUES, 2008, p. 120). Being exactly this period, the third great historical moment in the relations of art and society, which corresponds to the modern era in the West. It is from the 18th and 19th centuries that art finds its splendor, coinciding with the development of a more complex, more differentiated artistic sphere, which frees itself from the old religious and noble powers (LIPOVETSKY; SERROY, 2015).

The same era that prepared the emergence of the theory of aesthetics produced a growing interest in galleries, public museums, opera shows and made the space for the “publicization” of art a consequence of the invention of aesthetics and its justification for the “disengagement” of art in relation to art. political, religious and moral powers. An “autonomy of art and also of aesthetics” by breaking with the millennial guardianship imposed by the Church and its theology to social facts: politics, morals, the laws governing the city, the relationship with the products made by the “industry” human, including the objects we call “art” (RODRIGUES, 2008).

According to Rodrigues (2008), from the

era of aesthetics to that of contemporary art, the power inherent to discourse underwent major transformations. Among them, the corrosion of a “metaphysics of art” that had sustained the difficult division between art and worldly commitments, such as political action, body movements, social relations, the occupation of geographic and urban space.

The modern era was structured around the radical opposition between art and the commercial, culture and industry, art and entertainment, the pure and the impure, the authentic and the kitsch, elite art and mass culture, the vanguards and institutions. A system with two different modes of production, circulation and consecration, which essentially developed only within the limits of the western world (LIPOVETSKY; SERROY, 2015).

With the advent of modern art, it becomes possible to understand, from the artistic abstractions based on the avant-garde formalism that breaks academic tradition, the discussions that are becoming more and more in use today: “death of art, autonomy of art, art and politics, art and truth, the unconscious in art, the functions of art, the ephemerality of art, art and spectacle, art as a commodity, art and globalization, etc.” (FURTADO 2009, p. 8).

In the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, with the emergence of photography and later cinema, there was a growing devaluation of the imitative dimension of art, in favor of its expressive dimension (emotive, formal, symbolic). With this, the reflection on beauty takes the form of a description of aesthetic awareness, of the sensation produced by the work. Instead of imitating nature, the work of art begins to make visible an unknown world, which is the “sublime” (SOUZA, 2016).

AESTHETICS IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

It is in the 20th century that the various searches for a style that abbreviated the artist's need to find the "ideal form" emerged. "Cubism, futurism, constructivism, expressionism, fauvism, dadaism, surrealism, art nouveau, are, in the first half of the 20th century, the revelation of this restlessness" (FURTADO, 2009, p. 8).

According to Souza (2016), in post-modernity or contemporaneity, there are several aesthetic and anti-aesthetic possibilities in the same time and place, different from the past, as in the Renaissance, which existed for a long time only in Italy. What is used by critics today to elaborate their theories in order to strengthen the relationship between art and philosophy.

Still in the 20th century, according to Souza (2016), the modernist attitude of Marcel Duchamp, in Dadaism, and contemporary Andy Warhol (1928-1987), in Pop Art, of exposing world objects as works of art, was a shock treatment that signaled an omnipotence of the artist's "pure creative" attitude, portraying the vulgar, the mediocre and the everyday. Since, nowadays, these developments are related to each other, added to the developments of painting, sculpture, photography and other forms of art. Art assumes today, and will continue to assume, very variable forms in the so-called "Civilization of the Image".

It is art, from the 20th century on, mainly abstract art, that will incite the demarcation of a new place of aesthetics, using its mediating character as a confluence of the sensible and the intelligible, different from its previous characterization which, since its genesis, it prefers reason to the detriment of the sensitive, considered as minor knowledge, which inhabits the terrain of affections (FURTADO, 2009).

In the globalized world and in the consumer society, in which the construction of aesthetic assumptions has become an instrument of marketing, political, social and ideological manipulation, aesthetics has gained even greater importance, because by helping us to dismantle the pseudo reality, it helps us to attempt to avoid alienation, which will result from the misunderstanding of art (SOUZA, 2016).

In several currents, a new interest in the arts considered minor is manifested. While the criticism directed at modern industry multiplies, accused of spreading ugliness and uniformity, projects to beautify the everyday life of all classes grow, the desire to introduce art everywhere and in everything through the regeneration and dissemination of the arts decorative (LIPOVETSKY; SERROY, 2015).

"We live in the time of the aesthetic boom supported by hyper-consumption capitalism". They are new strategies employed by companies to create a new economic model that breaks with the capitalism of the industrial age. A capitalism centered on production was replaced by a capitalism of seduction focused on the pleasures of consumers through images and dreams, forms and reports (LIPOVETSKY; SERROY, 2015, p. 40).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Through this study it was possible to perceive a certain complexity when researching Aesthetics, mainly due to the definition of the time in which the changes occurred, which is not so different from other philosophical disciplines.

Responding to the study's question, "What was the point of consolidating the aesthetics established by Alexander Baumgarten?", we can say that the creation of the aesthetic discipline, as a philosophical discipline, was a great advance for philosophy. However, this moment was marked by profound changes in

the social, political and economic spheres in this new era of bourgeois dominance. It was also marked by discussions and changes in the field of knowledge, caused by the position of man in the world, which guaranteed man the right to be able to participate in the divine plan (PEREIRA, 2011).

Still answering the question “can it be said that aesthetics frees humanity?”, we can say that aesthetics, for all its precepts, can be considered a precondition for humanity to move towards freedom.

According to Eagleton (1993, p. 81), “aesthetics will not make humanity free, moral and true, but will prepare it internally to receive and respond to these rational imperatives”. What corroborates Schiller’s position that at the end of the 18th century, according to Lipovetsky; Serroy (2015, p. 22), stated that “it is through aesthetic education and the practice of the arts that humanity can advance towards freedom, reason and the Good”.

“The domain of aesthetics was constituted over at least three centuries, from the beginning of the Renaissance, to be finally consolidated in the romantic generation after Kant, between the end of the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th” (RODRIGUES, 2008, p. 120). In this period, the third great historical moment in the relations between art and society takes place, which corresponds to the modern era in the West.

The work *Aesthetica* (Baumgarten, 1993), contributed to this ancient area of philosophy gaining autonomy at the same time that the constitution of a philosophical discipline was historically linked with the intention of creating a sphere protected from incursions alien to the artistic (RODRIGUES, 2008).

Therefore, the study of Aesthetics is an area of philosophy that discusses the sensory knowledge that appropriates the beautiful and is expressed in art images, as opposed to

reason as a science of cognitive knowledge (SOUZA, 2016).

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