

## The adversaries of philosophical literature argue... (First title)

### Introduction

Therefore I lie to her and she to me and in our faults by lies we flattered be (W. Shakespeare). It is apparent that the role of art is not mimic and reflect the real world; the art as I understand it is much more violent. It is much more politically subversive and progressive. The real art lies, real art is like a hammer that is smashing and shattering our world without mercy. The art creates ruins, ruins that lay the foundation to our progress.

The title quotation outlines and questions the relation between art and philosophy. It can be divided into three major points; art cannot be translated to (different, other) abstract concepts, art is justified as long as it serves as the medium for the idea that is otherwise unsymbolisable (that we otherwise cannot communicate), and lastly the art constructs the experience itself unlike philosophy that recreates *our* experience. Despite the fact that the title quotation is coming from Simone de Beauvoir who was an existentialist I will analyze the title quotation in the tradition of (materialistic) structuralism (that slightly deviates from the ideas of existentialists). I believe that the structuralist explanation is not in any way *true*; the reason why I will address this problem from structuralist perspective is because I believe this method is politically more subversive and theoretically more productive.

In the final part of the essay I will show why art is irreducible to any other symbolic code as it is a unique truth procedure as well as a priceless tool for political emancipation. By describing the epistemological method of art and philosophy I will try to give contemplate what would their place in society be.

### Thesis 1: Art is a secondary symbolic code (structuralist perspective)

Art finds its first great philosophical adversary in Plato. He opposed art as he claimed (in accordance with his epistemological/ontological theory) that the art is a mere depiction of the real world; of perceivable objects that are themselves only a reflection of ideas. In his ontology everyday objects thus possess the least Being; art that just mimics them is thus just a reflection of reflection (and thus an ultimate lie – as being the least *true*). Although the theoretical perspective outlined by Plato opposes the theoretical approach of this essay (or rather theoretical approach of this essay opposes Plato) we can still in Plato's philosophy some theoretical insights that we will further elaborate on.

The stance of this essay is (like Plato's) that art is indeed just an image of an image. As structuralist reading of Kant suggests, the world (in his so called Copernic's turn) that the world is what we perceive it to be. Or to put it otherwise; our perception of the world already creates it. The world is caused (and shaped) with our perception of it (and not the other way around). The second gesture of Copernic's turn is however that what we perceive is never the whole reality, there is always an element that escapes us (object petit an in Lacanian terms, unsymbolisable trauma from childhood with Freudian terms or that about what we cannot speak in Wittgenstein's terms). To put it with Kojève the word simultaneously enables (symbolizes, totalizes) and kills (makes it unclear) the thing.

The reality is constructed (called into being) with language, with symbolic code (that includes language, cultural perceptions and norms, story's (Foucault) or transcendental narration (Kant)). Primary symbolic code constructs our reality; objects we perceive as existing exist because language

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gave them symbolic mandate to exist. Objects however do not exist uninfluenced by language; transcendental narration influences and shapes them. This is in Lacanian terms symbolic register.

An empirical experiment confirming this position (anthropological experiment) was conducted; it illustrated how the story (transcendental narration) shapes the perceived objects. Two groups were tasting wine and on first tasting they were given no information about the wine they tasted. The second time (the same group few months later) tasted the same wines just this time they were told a story about how the wine was produced. Consequently they marked the same wines much higher as they did the last time. The point of this experiment is not that they were deluded the second time; the very nature of perceived object changed – wine actually tasted better.

Every object we perceive is already influenced by (as Foucault calls it) our storytelling society. Art that is dealing with the perceived objects is in itself also a symbolic code. As Cassirer argues however art is only a secondary symbolic code, because it refers to the constructed reality and is not in itself constructing new reality (imaginary worlds created by new art are not new reality; they are always on some level just a reflection of the symbolic code. As Descartes claims dreams always retain certain aspect of the (Lacanian term) symbolic. If nothing else, as Descartes argues we cannot dream of the round rectangle); thus Cassirer calls art a *secondary* symbolic code.

Because art is a secondary symbolic code, art is in fact not relating to the object outside language, but on the object that are narrated by the language. Art is thus in fact referring to the language itself (as Lyotard claims even language itself is only refereeing to the language; every statement is referring to the previous statements; this is however not the scope of this essay).

Because art is not referring to something external it also cannot be translated to some other symbolic code. It has no reference with which an artistic expression can be compared; one cannot say it can say the same with other words as there is no it – there are only words. Thus although it comes from different theoretical background than the one this essay advocates I agree with the first point in the title quotation. Art cannot be translated into abstract concepts.

On this point I am of course aware of the limitations of my argumentation. Firstly the structuralism does not strictly negate the existence of the object and subject. It only opposes *traditional* interpretations of language (from example from Jakobson) that the language is a pragmatic tool for intersubjective communication about an object. Structuralism claims that the object is narrated (and distorted) by language and the object is subjectivized by language but is also its agent. Secondly post-structuralism (example of which is for instance Derrida) introduce a link to the *real* world with the introduction of reference (in addition to signifier and signified). The main point of this segment however still stands; art (that operates with language) cannot access object independently from language, whenever referring to object it refers to objects in language. Because there is thus no firm reference, art cannot be translated into some other form of symbolic code.

The second consequence of art being the secondary symbolic code is its inability to reconstruct experience itself. Because the art can only access the objects that are already in the language it cannot access objects themselves (objects that are undistorted by language). There is no such thing as (if I refer to anthropological experiment about wine) the substance of wine itself. There is only our (changing) perception of wine that is always influenced and shaped by language. To turn and

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paraphrase title quotation experience on imaginary plane is always also my experience of that experience.

There is nothing outside language; to quote Žižek outside of language is the desert of the real. Or to paraphrase Plato (if interpreting his parable of a cave as Myth as Žižek suggests) there is only blinding and devastating sun; we are condemned to live in the shadows. That being said I still believe art has a progressive role. In its constant struggle to reach the real (Lacanian term) it is disintegrating the symbolical field. And this destructiveness is in itself constructive. (I will elaborate on that in the following sections).

Thesis 2: Naming and pointing (Wittgenstein's perspective)

In Wittgenstein's philosophy (in his early work Tractates) he makes a distinction between two important gestures in philosophical method; namely between pointing and naming. To read Wittgenstein with Nietzsche: naming of an object is a sign of mastery (lordship) over the object. Or to put it with Levinas: the one who names does not love. In the core of all these understandings of naming is the idea that the name reduces the richness and uniqueness of the object to the social categories. As Wittgenstein argues even with an infinite predicates the name would still miss the naming object. To paraphrase A lover discourse: Fragments: when faced with overwhelming presence of the loved object we usually say the most idiotic and empty word – adorable; the word that is completely empty and has no meaning. And yet this is the only ethical form of naming; naming that is negating itself. Although idiotic it is the only *name* (signifier) one can give.

As opposed to naming Wittgenstein proposes pointing. Pointing says what can be said and in this way points to what cannot be said (Wittgenstein, Tractates). Pointing does not diminish the dignity of the object, it leaves it in silence. From this standpoint, if we assume that both philosophy and art do not name but point, we can still conclude that philosophy and art are neither *translatable nor interchangeable*. The core, the main message of both philosophy and art is beyond our symbolic horizon and thus it forms no clear reference for us to translate it.

Another important point that shows here is also that the core of philosophy and art is outside the language is outside symbolic. The way to access it (as previously hinted) is to shatter the symbolic, to break the language.

Political subversivity of art: development of art as a model for battle against ideology

So far I have depicted art as impotent, as inherently castrated insofar that it can never access the object (as it is a secondary symbolic code) and the only way for art to achieve truth is to negate the symbolic (thus effectively negating itself). Nonetheless I claim (as I have already stated in the introduction) that art is indeed politically subversive. Because it refers to the symbolic (which is ideological construct as both Lacan and Foucault would agree (although in Foucault's terminology transcendental narration would be called discourse)), development of art can be interpreted as a fight against ideology. Indeed in this section I will present the three main periods in art: naturalism, modernism and postmodernism. The development of the art can be understood as a gradual alienation from the object of their depiction. As Foucault argues, the certain art periods correspond to the materialistic consequences for their creation; this is however not the scope of this essay.

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Naturalistic art struggles to depict a thing that is here; the objective of naturalistic art is to create a believable and precise depiction of the present thing. In naturalistic art, the object of the art is least alienated. The artists feel they can access the object. Modernism can be marked as the art that has lost its object; the loss of the object corresponds to attempts (futile attempts) to grasp it again. In order to grasp the thing again, modernism tries to create new symbolic codes; example of this is Dadaism. Postmodernism however is so alienated from the object that it no longer even tries to access it. Postmodernism only refers to the language itself; spirit of postmodernism is beautifully captured by famous writer Borges: I am not a writer but a reader (meaning that the core interest of his art is no longer object but the art itself).

Reading that with Hegel's dialectics naturalism can be seen a statement (I can access the object), modernism is the negation of the statement (I cannot access the object) and postmodernism is the negation of the negation (I do not care about an object). Although post modernistic art appears to be impotent, as it seemingly shows no interest in the "real world" it is only with the denial of the object that art (and philosophy for that matter) can access the real (this will further be elaborated in the last section).

The gesture of post modernistic art that denies the object is an example of a politically productive act. Post modernistic art focuses on the disintegration of the very symbolic order that it operates in. Only this gesture opens new horizons for emancipatory struggles. Or to put it with Žižek: "The failure of the old emancipatory struggles was that they tried to realize the old emancipatory dreams. Instead we must find a new mode of dreaming." Post modernistic art is completely aware of its castration, its inherent powerlessness. Therefore it does not focus on the goal of the method but instead on the method itself. Instead of focusing on the object post modernistic art focuses on the symbolic code. Instead of pursuing the dreams, art focuses on the mode of dreaming. Because as Hannah Arendt claims: (Old) dreams never come true. As Dolar claims: Ideology is not a false consciousness, but the reality, with which we compare our statements. To paraphrase Lacan: real art is brave enough to dream and never wake up (it is brave enough to reject reality).

Theoretical productivity of art: the lie that is the truth

The reality is constituted with language, the language both calls the thing into being and distorts it, it gives it life and kills it. Because however the language, as Foucault claims, is the product of its material conditions it is itself ideological (it has to be noted that the ideology always has to operate as Freud argues on sub-consciousness level, or to put it with marks on the level of material belief (as a praxis and not a belief)) and art operates with language (as it is just a secondary symbolic code) then how can art still be what Badiou calls a truth procedure.

As it was hinted through the essay and suggested with the opening passage from Shakespeare (for whom I will not claim that he had already such theoretical insights nor will I credit his work to epistemological luck) the truth if the art comes from the lie.

To explain it with Lacanian terms; truthful lie in art is a form symbolical fraud. To explain it on the famous example from two Greek painters (whose names I forgot): imaginary fraud was that one of the painters painted grapes with such realism that he fooled the birds into smashing into the painting. Symbolic fraud was the work of the other painter, he painted curtains and his adversary asked him to reveal the painting behind the curtains; the trick was that the curtains were the picture.

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The syntaxes of the symbolical fraud is hiding that I am not hiding anything. The trick here is that fraud does not refer to the object but on the symbolic field itself (much like post modernistic art). This is the first instance of lying art that forces us to reconsider very foundations of our perception (and reasoning).

The second explanation of art comes from the (clinical praxis of the theoretical approach presented here) Freud. It is aptly called Freudian slip; the mechanism is that through the gap in the symbolic, through the mistake in the language, unconscious comes forth (the register of real in Lacanian terms). The same mechanism was already described by Aristotle; he called this the tragic mistake. This is the mistake "by which the man becomes what he is".

The same principle was on the level of statement formalized with the work of Gödel and Wittgenstein. As mentioned previously the real message of the art and philosophy is in the silence, the absence of the statement (that is still a statement – Lyotard). Formally speaking this is the point where language falls apart. Reading Wittgenstein with Gödel this silence functions as the metalanguage that defines the spoken language. The silence is however still approachable and approaching this silence is the task of philosophy. The silence described here are the inconsistencies of language (that are the consequence of its formal structure - Gödel) as well as gaps that are the reflection of the divided reality (Hegel).

The role of the art as the truth procedure is to highlight these gaps, these disagreements. With formalizing them, we also formalize the silence that dwells in these gaps. As Wittgenstein claims by saying what can be said I will say what cannot be said. Here I do not however claim that the art/philosophy can describe the whole reality. The gap, the divisions them self are divided, the gaps them self are gapped. The silence is (like any other language) structurally flawed. The silence itself needs the metalanguage. This metalanguage is the absence of the agent of the language. The absence of philosopher/artist. This tirade language/silence/absence of silence corresponds to Hegel's negation of negation. The absence of the philosopher/artist is the final frontier of our world.

## Conclusion

It can be observed that in this essay I made no distinction between philosophy and art. I believe both are secondary symbolic codes (as they deal with symbolic), both can be politically subversive as long as they negate the object (for the same reason post modernistic art is more subversive than modernistic art I believe philosophy of correlation is more subversive than philosophy of substance) and both are truth procedures that are bound with the absence of the silence.

Because we have no reference we cannot freely translate one symbolic order into another (although philosophy and art are epistemologically similar they are not interchangeable). Because object is always ideological we cannot perceive it *as it is*. There is no perception of experience itself; everything is always the experience of experience. The most subversive thing that we can do is to except this fast.

Lastly I am fully aware that positions in this essay might seem paradoxical. It is not however the consequence of a bad style (as evasive as it may sound) but of the nature of the reality and the language itself. My task is not to murder the truth, to solve the disagreements. My task is to formalize them. Because truth is not the solution of the disagreement, truth is the disagreement

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itself (or rather the silence behind the disagreement). Truth is the silence that escapes the grasp of my essay. And in this silence I hope my essay will resonate...