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Abstract

Freyer's conception of works of art was scarcely discussed in the literature. This is a pity since, as we are going to see below, his innovative philosophy of language also outlined fruitful perspectives in the realm of aesthetics. In short, Freya holds that only complete sentences express thought. Sentences of literature express “mock thoughts”. The early Wittgenstein closely followed Freya on this point. The Tractatus holds that only propositions model (“picture”) states of affairs. Works of art are merely objects seen sub specie aeternitatis, beyond time (Wittgenstein 1961, 83). In the 1930s and 1940s, however, Wittgenstein started to claim that works of art can convey thoughts. To be more exact, successful (gelungene), or cogent works of art can play the role of gestures that show life directions. In this sense, artists “have something to teach” (Wittgenstein 1980, 36).

1. Frege: Works of Art as One and Many

We shall begin with Gottlob Freyee's philosophy of language which claims that only complete sentences express thoughts. Sentences stating commands, wishes, requests, etc., are “exclamations in which one vents feelings, groans, sighs, laugh”. (Frege 1918, 365) They are “mock thoughts” (Scheingedanken).

Starting from this position, Frege advanced an idiosyncratic theory of art. According to it, “the poet does not really depict (malte) anything: he only provides the impetus for others to do so, furnishing hints (Winke) to this end, and leaving it to the hearer to give his words body and shape.” (Frege 1897, 140) In other words, works of art only tease our imagination in such a way that every one of us constructs her own, private work of art. “The real work of art is a structure of ideas within us. [...] The external thing—the painting, the statue—is only a means for producing the real work of art in us. On this view, anyone who enjoys a work of art has his own work of art [in her head].” (Ibid., 132)

To put Frege's conception in Wittgenstein's words: the task of the artists is not to picture facts but to make us believe a story or to follow a theme of music. The semantics of mathematics and science is quite different: it is objective. The numbers, for example, exist in the "third world" and only wait to be discovered—like unexplored continents are discovered by geographic explorers. Objective semantics have also the propositions of everyday life when we speak "seriously", i.e. with practical intentions (for example, when we inform our interlocutor, who asks us about the weather outdoors, that "it's raining now"). The task in such cases is to state the truth.

Freyer's conception further maintains that exactly because each work of art is constructed by its consumers in many different ways, there is no truth in this realm: everyone has her own, privately constructed aesthetic individual. In contrast, the individuals of the external world, of logic and mathematics—the individuals of the language and science—are public; they are not private.

With this conception Frege intended to save the objective character of science. Unfortunately, it gave rise to serious difficulties in the realm of aesthetics. The main problem is that the general public, the audience, can unmistakably identify a work of art as one individual, so that when we listen to a particular piece of music we can identify it, reproduce it without mistake. We can also distinguish an original work of art from its counterfeit; we can judge, for example, that the new melody that we now listen to is close to another one in style.

One solution of these difficulties is to assume that even if every one of us constructs her own work of art, different minds can unmistakably identify their "teaser" as the same work of art. In the same way, we can have many different photos of one individual but can unmistakably recognize them as pictures of that same person.

2. The Later Wittgenstein: Works of Art Communicate Thoughts

Freyer's position on works of art was adopted by the early Wittgenstein. According to him, thoughts can be only expressed through propositions, not through works of art. To be more exact, in propositions language arranges things experimentally in an effort to model facts (states of affairs) of reality (Wittgenstein 1961, 13). But in order to qualify as models, propositions must be in a position to go proxy for possible facts. If not, they will be "senseless", and so will be neither true nor false.

Music (Wittgenstein was mainly interested in philosophy of music), in contrast, does not model reality. That is why pieces of music cannot be senseless—only propositions can be such. That is also why, while to every fact two propositions correspond, true and false, this is not the case with the note-script.

At the same time, Wittgenstein added an important point to Frege's theory of works of art. It was that "the work of art is the object seen sub specie aeternitatis." (1961, 83) This object lies at the boundary of the world and so is not one of them.

In the 1930s and 1940s, however, Wittgenstein changed his position. Now he underlined that music is akin to language, despite the fact that the two are not identical. Wittgenstein's next step was to set out that the composers and writers can think—despite the fact that not all of them do this. Beethoven and Brahms, for example, were good thinkers; Gustav Mahler was not. This means that music can express thoughts that, similarly to thoughts expressed

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1 A similar conception was developed a century later in Walton (1990), without reference to Frege.
in language, have their message. Moreover, the content of the musical thought can be communicated (conveyed). It is true that this message can't be put into words: indeed, that is why people use to express it alternatively, not through language but through music. This message, however, can be very precise.

3. Works of Art are Source of Information

Let us recapitulate what we have learned in the previous section. The work of art does not refer to individuals or events with strictly fixed position in space and time. Nevertheless, it can express thoughts; it does not just express an amorphous feeling, as the logical positivists believed it does. Its task is also not simply to induce a specific kind of pleasure in us, as Immanuel Kant had suggested. This point is indicated by the fact that, in contrast to a piece of chocolate that can produce gastronomic pleasures in us, and similarly to other artifacts, the work of art has a specific structure that is embedded in the context of the specific art form. The work of art is articulated.

In an effort to further clarify the nature of the work of art, we shall refer to Wittgenstein's claim that "it creeps itself (scheicht sich ein) into my life. I adopt it as my own." (1980, 73) This point helps to understand better the message of the work of art—according to the later Wittgenstein. In short, it addresses problems of our life. It can show how we can solve problems of life, helping to change it so that it ceases to be problematic for us (27).

Exactly in this sense, works of art are also sources of information. That is why we believe that we can learn from a work of art. Or, as Wittgenstein put it, "poets, musicians, etc... have something to teach" (36). In support of this claim, we can refer to Bob Dylan who maintained that "you could listen to his [Woody Guthrie's] songs and actually learn how to live." (Corliss 2005) That is also why works of art are sometimes seen as pieces of "philosophy." In particular, Friedrich Nietzsche used to say that "music is the true philosophy: it can namely intimate us a higher form of knowledge, or wisdom" (Nietzsche 1888, 2-3). We joint here also Friedrich Schiller's claim that works of art can teach their consumers—despite the fact that we strongly diverge from Schiller on what exactly, and in what exactly way they can teach.

4. Ontology of Aesthetic Gestures

In the course of the transformation of Frege's philosophy of art, the later Wittgenstein replaced Frege's hints (Winke) with gestures (Gebärden). (As a matter of fact, already the meaning of Frege's German term Wink(e) is close to the English gestures.) Wittgenstein was explicit on this point: "For me this musical phrase is a gesture" (Wittgenstein 1980, 73); "architecture is a gesture." (42)

In connection with the conclusion we reached in § 3, we can now say that aesthetic gestures can show us a new, specific life-direction. They can help us to find out what we want in life, how to act, to which social group we belong; etc. In fact, there is a whole universe of aesthetic gestures that point at different directions of life. In our aesthetic ontology, we interpret them as "aesthetic vectors".

It deserves notice that there are other kinds of gestures that show life-directions: (i) Politicians and sages, to start with them, typically use to point different life directions of the communities they are supposed to lead. Indeed, we can clearly differentiate the gestures of political life direction of Lenin, of Saddam Hussein, of Yassir Arafat, etc. (ii) As Wittgenstein has noted, miracles, too, can direct our life: they can be seen as "gestures which God makes." (45) (iii) One of Wittgenstein closer followers, John Wisdom, had noted that a dream (but also a psychoanalytic session) can change the light in which we see the things and events in your life and so to change its direction (Wisdom 1973, 43). (iv) Finally, an event in life, too, can change the direction (the style) of our life. Typical case is Buddha's awakening from the lethargy of the mundane life after he witnessed examples of sick, aged and suffering persons.

5. Style

Every aesthetic gesture has a specific style. We further claim that exactly the style secures the connection (the bridge) between the work of art and the way of living that it can outline. To be more exact, the style of a work of art has the power to direct our life-style: love for freedom, strength of character, etc.

We are using the modal verb "can" here since only cases of, what we shall call, successful (gelungane), or cogent, work of art can do this job. To speak with Wittgenstein, cogent work of art is the work of art that achieves a vision of a single object sub specie aeternitatis. The mediocre works of art, in contrast, are rather topos gestures. They can communicate new direction in life only theoretically, not really. In fact, their main service is to convey entertainment, to bring their consumers away from the "necessities" of the external world—nothing beyond this.

We shall start our analysis of style pointing out that it characterizes artifacts that we make with know-how (Ryle 1949, 48). There is no style of coughing or sneezing or eating. However, there is a style of chess-playing, of painting and of composing pieces of music. There is also a difference in the role style plays in producing different kinds of artifacts. The role of style in the works of art, in sports, in politics, and also in life is crucial. Apparently, this is the case since in these realms we express ourselves. Moreover, this point is connected with the fact that exactly in these realms we materialize the freedom of our will. In contrast, in artifacts (in grammar and in logic) which are determined through norm, so that in these the free will plays a minimal role (if any), the style is of lesser importance.

But how can a successful work of art change the style of living? Perhaps the following remark of the later Wittgenstein can help to understand this point: "the fact that life is problematic shows that the shape of your life does not fit into the life's mould. So you must change the way you live." (1980, 27) Apparently, a successful work of art can help exactly in such cases. It can change the perspective we see our life, so that after that change, your life better fits into the life mould.

We are going to make the next step in our analysis of style with the remark: that exactly the style makes us see (or hear) the object of the cogent work of art sub specie aeternitatis. Especially helpful to better understand this point is a remark Wittgenstein made in 1934: the style is "the general necessity seen sub specie aeternitatis" (1997, 2"

2 See more about the works of art as gestures in Gall (2014).
3 On how we joint social (mental) groups see Milov (2012). A similar conception was also developed in Bourdieu (1979).
4 In a similar key, Hegel maintained that the successful work of art "touches" the Absolute. Unfortunately, it cannot fuse with the Absolute since art is not the appropriate form to this purpose in principle: we can reach fusion with the Absolute only in philosophy.
27). (Apparently, Wittgenstein meant here the style of a work of art, not the style of printing or of grammar.) We interpret this remark as meaning that being the necessity of the work of art, the style is the synthetic a priori that the artist creates. Moreover, this necessity is implied by, what can be called, the “law” of the style of the work of art. Interpretations of the same work of art (of a particular piece of music, for example) are different ways of following its law (its general necessity).

Literature
Corliss, Richard 2005 "When He Was on His Own", Time Magazine, September 19, 55.