

## ART AND ART'S DE-AESTHETICIZATION

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### **Abstract:**

This paper approaches the phenomenon of art from a contemporary perspective. It discusses art as spiritual modality of expression which testifies to man's specific being-in-the-world. It also analyzes the idea of artwork in reference to its aesthetic, social, and historical determinations, while keeping in mind the problematization of the essence, content, and finality of art. In this context, the paper examines two significant aesthetic guidelines: *aestheticism* or the movement "l'art pour l'art," founded on the cult of beauty as a supreme value, and the *de-aestheticization of art*, a negativist contemporary movement that contests the aesthetic and artistic tradition. Finally, the paper holds that, contrary to Hegel's prophecy on the "death" of art, the aesthetic experience shows that contemporary art continues to assert itself and to diversify itself with an impressive energy. Based on this background, the phenomenon of de-aestheticization is a challenge which gives new impulses to the evolution of authentic art, spurring man's ability to perceive affectively and to understand reality in new ways, adding to it, as Nietzsche said, a metaphysical factor in order to transcend it.

**Key words:** art, aesthetic value, artwork, artistic, de-aestheticization.

Thus formulated, the title of this paper might seem, at first, paradoxical to the reader. In fact, it captures a characteristic aspect of contemporary art, a sense that something unusual is going on in this world of human creation, and in our lives intrinsically. It seems that the current products of artistic creation undermine our definition of art. This being the case, questions inevitably emerge: what is art? Next, is art possible outside aesthetics? Finally, what is the meaning of "de-aestheticization" of artistic work? In what follows, we shall try to seek appropriate answers to these questions.

Without doubt, art is and has remained one of the essential fields of culture. It constitutes a spiritual modality of expression which testifies to man's specific being-in-the-world. Furthermore, we are constantly surprised by its miraculous power to reveal a deeper understanding of this being-in-the-world, and especially to tell us something significant about the ourselves.<sup>1</sup> It is a way of expressing oneself freely and without boundaries in forms which speak especially to our more sensitive perceptions, thus differentiating itself from other utilitarian modes of expression, as well as from other cultural configurations like science, morality, religion, and philosophy, by which the spirit speaks to the world.<sup>2</sup> This distinction derives mainly from the fact that art, beyond many definitions which have been given to it, is an embodiment of the aesthetic value which gives it its identity and special legitimacy among all other products of human activity. Although in art's structure different values (moral, political, economic, legal, religious, etc.) co-exist which are inextricably intertwined – and which in fact constitute the substance of life which nourishes the artist – the art, or more accurately the artwork, is a self-denial.<sup>3</sup> It can be anything – a document, a utilitarian object, or one which comprises empirical meanings, but was itself excluded from the sphere of art. It is true that, in this regard, there are competing points of view, to which we will return later. For now we must add one other important aspect to this idea: arising from the

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<sup>1</sup> See Marin Aiftincă, *Misterul artei și experiența estetică* (*Mystery of Art and Aesthetic Experience*), Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2007, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Idem, *Perspective filosofice* (*Philosophical Perspectives*), Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2011, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> The concept of art is so general and abstract that it corresponds to it anything real. It circumscribes its content and acquires concreteness only when we associate it with the artwork.

tension between the human spirit on the one hand and external reality and the self on the other, works of art “detach themselves from the empirical world and bring forth another world, one opposed to the empirical world, as if this other world too were an autonomous entity.”<sup>4</sup>

From a similar point of view, Tudor Vianu, arguing against Étienne Souriau – who claimed that works of art are *objects* – proposes the concept of the “areality” of art in order to highlight its character “of being abstracted and isolated from the practical plan of things.”<sup>5</sup> He advocates for the idea that “art is not an object, but the appearance of an object” and, therefore, belongs “to the ideal region of appearances.”<sup>6</sup> As a result, art loses its autonomy from other forms of human activity, autonomy which had claimed that any artistic creation, although heterogeneous in its content, is to be valued by what is specific to it, i.e. on the basis of aesthetic value, not by appealing to external criteria, on whose basis it may be asked to be something that it is not.

If “the universal and absolute need for art” has an explanation grounded in metaphysics – which brings to mind, among others, Hegel’s argument that it “is man’s rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self”<sup>7</sup> – then the phenomenization of art seems to beg for both temporal and spatial definition. While the first dimension captures the universal and eternal character of the art in a conceptual way, the second reflects its continuous particularization, becoming, and diversification through its empirical nature. In other words, art as a form of human expression was and is, anywhere and anytime, simply *what it is*, namely art, despite any contrary opinions. Seen through the lens of time, art has objectified itself in artistic creations which have evolved in the most profound and diverse ways, both across historical ages and in relation to different cultural spaces. From ancient and medieval art to the Renaissance,

classicism, and romanticism, from the changes of modernity to the feverish searches of contemporary and postmodernist revolts, from the art of the ancient Orient to the Egyptian, Hellenistic, African, and European traditions, there can be found an almost infinitely diverse kaleidoscope of artistic works, in which are mirrored the representative elements of the historical and spiritual life of all the historical ages and the cultures of the world. In other words, the mythological, philosophical, religious, and scientific visions on the world, the moral conceptions, the historical and political facts, etc., are filtered into a huge variety of artistic creations which encapsulate the society in which they were created.

Certainly, the above constitutes only one of the aspects which confirms Adorno’s thesis about the double character of the art. He maintains, on the basis of a broad consensus, that art is simultaneously autonomous and *fait social*,<sup>8</sup> that it immediately reverberates outward from the horizon of its autonomy. There is a close relationship with *empiria*, confirmed by the fact that different cultures and the historical ages – under the influence of a definite spirituality or a certain conception on the world – understood art in their own culturally specific ways, assigning it different meanings and functions and thus shaping the taste which has guided the creation and the evaluation of artistic products.

According to Pareyson, these different aspects – the perception of art, the purposes of art, and the ideals which have guided it – together constitute the content of the “poetics” which govern “the artistic” and have a historical and active character.<sup>9</sup> Unlike aesthetics, which Pareyson maintains is interested in defining a philosophical “concept” of art with a speculative character, poetics “appear in order to propose artistic ‘ideals’ and art ‘programs.’”<sup>10</sup> As such, they are concentrated in normative codes of creation and argued in theoretical works, ‘shaping the author’s style and the public’s taste. Equally legitimate from an aesthetic point of view, Pareyson says that poetics “prescribe the task of art to be ‘depicting’ reality, as in the programs of a realistic,

<sup>4</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Teoria estetică (Aesthetische Theorie)*, Romanian translation from German by Andrei Cornea, Gabriel H. Decuble, Cornelia Eșianu, Pitești, Paralela 45, 2005, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Tudor Vianu, *Estetica (Aesthetics)* Bucharest, Publishing House for Literature, 1968, p. 77.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Prelegeri de estetică, vol.I (Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik, Band I)*, Romanian translated by D.D. Roșca, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 1966, p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *op. cit.*, p. 5. (Romanian translation, p. 11).

<sup>9</sup> Luigi Pareyson, *Estetica. Teoria formativității (Teoria della formativita)*, Romanian translated by Marian Papa-hagi, Bucharest, Univers Publishing House, 1977, p. 405

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 406.

naturalistic, veristic art”<sup>11</sup> or to “transfigure,” “deform,” or “decompose” reality, aiming to create distinct finalities or simply to invent an original reality, in contrast to the reality known by experience or even opposite to it. Other poetics look for innocent spontaneity in art or instinctive immediacy in expressing feelings, insomuch as others look upon art as a scholarly effort, extraneous of any emotional signs.<sup>12</sup>

At least two of these aspects seem necessary to retain in the context of poetics. First, Pareyson – who argued that “art is pure formativity” – considers it of no consequence whether one is a proponent of one or another poetics. As in artistic creation, what is important is for the author to “imagine” and to “form,” so that the result be authentic art. Also, it is essential that art should be interpreted not primarily in a poetic sense, but an aesthetic one, starting from a phenomenology of artistic experience.

The second aspect is that no poetics should be made absolute. No poetics should claim that it alone contains the essence of art in order to set itself up to be a false aesthetic. Some poetics or other may be recommended to artists on the basis of its conception of the world, but it must have the character of a desire; it must never turn into an imperious order, nor impose criteria for appreciation of artistic work,<sup>13</sup> as has happened historically. The most recent and relevant example for this discussion is the unprepossessing doctrine of socialist realism, which encompassed, among others, the “realistic novel” that reached its zenith in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is widely known that in acquiring its autonomy, art had respond to the call of the political, religious, educational imperative, or engaged in frivolous games in the service of decorativism, entertainment, and (more recently) commercial concerns. In these circumstances, the artist assumed the point of view of “the one who orders,” thus aiming to produce some effects on the public.

It is a truth which Hegel recognizes, but does not legitimize. Apparently conciliatory, the philosopher believes that art in general “can serve other ends,” assuming the role of a simple “ancillary.” In such a situation, however, it acquires its character not from itself, “but from other objects and circumstances.”<sup>14</sup> However, art has the ability to

“cut itself free from this servitude in order to raise itself, in free independence, to the truth in which it fulfills itself independently and conforms with its own ends alone.”<sup>15</sup> Therefore, when art is subject to the commands or requirements of a pre-established program, it exists not so much by itself, but according to the way in which it honors the command. Art can, however, only fulfill its mission by pursuing its own ends. When it is created without programmatic constraints, the artwork opens itself to reflection and confirms the freedom of its creator.

From this theoretical promontory on which modernity has settled, the question concerning art's essence, content, and purpose has resumed with an energy which violates the taboos, traditions, and stiff rules arising from the context of the social and spiritual conditionings which engage new artists. The problems generated by the spiritual tensions of the time emphasize two theoretical guidelines. One is aestheticism or the movement “l'art pour l'art,” founded on the cult of beauty as the supreme value. The second centers around the idea of transgressing aesthetic exclusiveness and of structuring the tensioned value areas of the extra-artistic.

The first guideline is a well-known reaction from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century designed to protect art against the falsifying pressures of the modern world, caught in the whirlwind of expansion and urban planning. Promoters of aestheticism, facing a hostile social reality, “have ignited the passionate cult of beauty” and aim to reach a platonic self-perfection through “the love for visible beauty.”<sup>16</sup> They searched for beauty as the absolute value, cultivating a perfect *form* while being less interested in ideas. Accordingly, they formulated the conception of art isolated not only from life, but also from the “insensitive” public. With its specificity, art exists in self, its purpose consisting in being beautiful.

Theorizing this aesthetic vision, Poe wrote in his essay “The philosophy of composition” that the essence of beauty lies in the “intense and pure elevation of the soul.” It is an effect which must become the fundamental concern for any artist. The art of the poetry, i.e. the art of words, is “the rhythmic creation of beauty. Her only arbitrator is taste. With the intellect or consciousness it has only

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 409.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *op. cit.*, p. 7. (Romanian translated, p. 13).

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> K.E. Gilbert, H. Kuhn, *Istoria esteticii* (A History of Aesthetics), Romanian translated by Sorin Mărculescu, Bucharest, Meridiane Publishing House, 1972, p. 418.

collateral relations.”<sup>17</sup> The echo of these ideas has been heard even after the protagonists of the movement *art for art* had been gripped by delusions themselves. A leading proponent of abstractionism, Kandinsky, lived the aestheticism fever. “Everything in it was guiding toward purity,” succeeded in “releasing the line and knowledge of any subjugation.”<sup>18</sup>

Determined by certain justificatory elements, aesthetic formalism meant the focusing on one aspect of the work and neglecting the other, the content. Without doubt, the history of art attests to the fact that the two components are sometimes separated, but although their integration is a prerequisite of the aesthetic value and artistic quality<sup>19</sup> – somewhat obsolete today as a problem – we do not find it redundant to remember the truth that the balance and unity between aesthetic form and life content or ideational content constitute the success of an artistic creation. Imbalances in the structure of the work are detrimental to its quality and its value. According to Adorno’s observation, “Art perceived strictly aesthetically is art aesthetically misperceived.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the concept of “pure” art and its empirical expression in creation has provoked many vehement criticisms, down to “outright disregard and disdain for the aesthetic infatuation.”<sup>21</sup> Aesthetic purism is thus denounced by the second orientation – itself no less excessive than its competitor – which preaches non-art or anti-art. As a result, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the phenomenon of art became dominated by various themes and

provocative ideas, motivations not infrequently contradictory. There are strong internal tensions from which erupt the well-known vanguardist currents that invade literature, theatre, music, and plastic arts, affirming a loud negativist reaction in the name of absolute freedom of expression and of searching for a fresher and purer language. Thus the creative exercises which are subordinated to an ideal which transcends the art are legitimized.

Without doubt these manifestations, with everything that followed them over the last erratic century, generated and maintained the process of the de-aestheticization of art, a process which has continued into the present. In fact, de-aestheticization is the opposite of aesthetic purism and is integrated into the reality designated by the terms *modern art* or *postmodern art*. It can be seen in those who contest the aesthetic character of artwork and therefore circumvent the artistic features of an aesthetic object or, more broadly, artistic creations of any kind. It is believed that the theoretical approaches which emerged in the Renaissance and Enlightenment are regarded as obsolete, having lost the “humanist-utopian” impetus and responsible for the fact that “art, amorphous and perverted, has decayed down to the level of an aesthetics of triviality” which “manifest itself as pretentious, cultivating at the same time comfort in a lack of ideas.”<sup>22</sup> As a result of such shocking and excessive declarations, the artist’s place in the “aesthetic area” and the achievement of some creations destined to delight the taste is anathematized on the grounds that they would be academist and superficial. For example, Mozart’s and Schumann’s music, or the music of any composer that proposes human nobility and gives prevalence to harmony, melody, and spiritual beauty, is sometimes dismissed in the service of exalting aleatorim, the new concrete, electronic music that addresses to us in ways which exalt the sensual experiences or abstractions which aim to present agitated technological civilization in terms of which the man is re-orientated toward his primary nature.

The facts and motivations behind the de-aestheticizing reaction are most diverse. Often divergent, they converge in challenging and refusing the classical or widely accepted concepts and principles of art, opera, aesthetics, reception of artistic creation, etc., considering them obsolete and

<sup>17</sup> Apud K.E. Gilbert, H. Kuhn, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Courthion, *Curentele și tendințe în arta secolului XX* (L’Art independent), Romanian translated by Maria Carпов, Bucharest, Publishing House Meridiane, 1973, p. 187.

<sup>19</sup> A distinction is made between the work of art (of any kind) and the aesthetic object (concretization of the work in the aesthetic experience). This separation leads implicitly to the distinction between artistic values, which are stated in the work, and aesthetic values, which appear concretely in the aesthetic object (see Roman Ingarden, *Studii de estetică* (Problemy teorii literaturii), Romanian translated by Olga Zaicik, Bucharest, Publishing House Univers, 1978, p. 223).

<sup>20</sup> Theodore W. Adorno, *op. cit.*, p. 6. (Romanian translated), p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Werner Hofmann, *Fundamentele artei moderne*, vol.I (Grundlagen der Modernen Kunst, Band I), Romanian translated by Elisabeth Axmann-Mocanu, Bucharest, Publishing House Meridiane, 1977, p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

effete. As a result, these concepts are re-examined. Naturally, this need to re-examine such concepts and principles is not an isolated one. These questions regarding art have been asked in many different historical contexts, so it is hardly surprising that they should arise again in the present. What *is* surprising is the vehemence with which art's own conditions of existence and roles are being contested. The impetus of de-aestheticization, of anti-art, is generated by the historical and social evolution of the culture in general, and of the art phenomenon in particular. In conflict with everything that is a copy or an outdated imitation of reality or only had value long ago, the artistic experience – guided by the principle that there is no art without freedom – is wholly subordinate to the frantic search for the new beyond any conventions. It finds refuge in reflection, claiming that genuine art is not art which is comforting for the viewer because of the pleasure it creates and its lack of any upsetting ideas, and that it is not identical with the “aesthetic reservations” of the museums, but that true art instead asks the viewer to undertake a perceptive confrontation. In the cause of generating works that are addressed “not to the bodily eye, but especially to the spiritual one” (Splengler, *The Decline of the West*), the languages and forms of artistic expression put us constantly in the face of creations which confirm the de-aestheticization phenomenon. The current literature is dominated by “texts,” and less and less by compositions which legitimate their being in this horizon of art; poetry is freed from the poetic thrill through “de-lyricization.” The American critic Harold Bloom said, not so long ago, that “nowadays there is an abandonment of any aesthetic and cognitive exigency, which is the hallmark of great literature. Imaginative literature, as was cultivated by Shakespeare, Cervantes, Dante, and Montaigne, yielded to the abominable misery of the best-sellers (...) and of their equivalents from Spain and other countries of the world.”<sup>23</sup> In turn, the scenic arts tend to abandon the conventions of the realistic show, trying other unconventional means in order to generate aesthetic sensitivity in the public. Theatrical representations imbued with rudimentary elements and off-hand vulgarities in the postmodern form of performance-art, with amazing acoustic and visual effects, are protests against formal art;<sup>24</sup> the

“open dance” or pedestrian dance in an obvious attempt to explore the everyday problems of the people. Equally striking is the phenomenon of de-aestheticization in the plastic arts, a domain in which the public are often presented with confusing artefacts, at least at first sight. Huge statues are created from bizarre combinations of material waste, “Alien King” statues representing hideous creatures or other awful sculptures – such as those created by Olivier of Sagazan – which show the human body perforated by objects of torture, works subordinate to the slogan “one person's art is another's nightmare.” Another example: the kinetic sculptures of Theo Jansen, representing great moving machines, like the skeletons of some huge animals. And yet another example from the field of painting: Austrian Wolfgang Becksteiner, whose art is conceptual, shows under the title “The Mystery of Values” (*Inner Values*) a group of works in the form of the cases of wood which serve to transport the art. Glued to the wall of the exhibition, these cases offer to eyes an outer sight and appear as paintings; located in the showroom space, they seem to be sculptures. Apart from some written information, you may not know what the cases contain. If you open them, you discover inside pictorial works which can be destroyed, being of no value. This group of works convey the author's message that “the classical work of art, and with it the classical concept of art, evaporates.”<sup>25</sup> Overall, these examples show the tendency to belittle the cultural resonance of artistic creation.

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“Since performance art derives from the visual art to the same extent that it derives from *avant-garde* theater, the performer creates a sequence of acoustic and visual effects with the body, movements and the words which contribute to an abstract and associative collage, instead of a dramatic action. In order to expand the capacity of self-expression, the performer, without seeking to represent any character, will adopt a *persona* to exploit different genres and types of sexuality, different ethnicities and social positions. Sometimes, withal, the performers, being endowed with ‘naive vitality and frankness,’ execute things, like singing and dancing, which are not prepared...” (*Ibidem*, pp. 194-195).

<sup>25</sup> Die Sammlung JENSEITS DES SEHENS, *Kunst Verbindet Blinde und Sehende*, Sammlungskatalog anlässlich ihres 10. jährigen Bestehens und der Ausstellung, 25. März bis 26. August 2012 im Benediktinerstift Admont-Bibliothek & Museum, A-8911 Admont 1, Redaktion Michael Braunsteinet, P. Winfried Schwab, 2012 Stift Admont, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> *România literară* (Romanian Literary) nr. 36, anul XLIII, 9 septembrie 2011, note in “Meridiane” page.

<sup>24</sup> For details see Alexa Visarion, *Spectacolul ascuns* (*The Hide Show*), Bucharest, UNATC, 2002, pp. 193-209.

Art communicates the outside world to us, affirming a wide range of attitudes toward empirical reality, including its repudiation. Whereas the artistic object, from the perspective of the phenomenological aesthetics, is an intentional structure,<sup>26</sup> modalities of artistic expression – such as those to which we have referred – can be interpreted as forms of protest against ugliness, vulgarity, lechery, turbulence, violence, and many other aspects of our civilization as also against the aesthetic and the art itself, which testifies to the dominant spirit of our times.

Intellectual products arising from these impulses violate the artistic experience and aesthetic sensitivity, working to be anything else than what we used to understand by art. Refusing aesthetics, they are objects between objects, and have the value of a sign or of a document, and thereby abandon themselves to aesthetic indifference. Adorno warns us that when art is perceived only through an aesthetic perspective, it is not correctly perceived. Yet Adorno does not hesitate to assert that “the tendency to perceive art either in extra-aesthetic or pre-aesthetic fashion, which to this day is undiminished by an obviously failed education, is a barbaric residue and a danger of regressive consciousness.”<sup>27</sup> And yet, it seems to us that we must be more tolerant to present artistic experiments, accepting them as exercises for opening new horizons in art and, perhaps, for giving substance a new aesthetics. On this score, it has been suggested that we invert one of the major criteria of the art-public relationship: instead of claiming that art must be accessible to us, to answer to the desire for a comfortable, passive enjoyment, we as the receptors should instead be “accessible to art,”<sup>28</sup> facing the inaccessibility of an artistic object and hoping to find the joy of discovering aesthetic value beyond appearance. Of course, the experience of such joy is not offered without being spoken about, inasmuch as it is not spontaneous and naive. It speaks to the need to constantly augment aesthetic culture in order for it to pervade beyond the mere structural form of the artistic work, where the truth of art dwells.

Somewhat correlative to these ideas is the idea that present artistic creation, in particular art that has arisen from anti-aesthetic tendencies and has been

placed in a rationalistic framework by contemporary civilization, transcends the conditions of the current representation of art and, as such, requires *post factum* interpretation or comment by the author or by specialists for the public. The sense of the interpretative approach or of the commentary arises from the guidance of contemplator, until the point at which the artistic object reveals its intimate substance, creating a state of amazement.<sup>29</sup>

It is a partially valid point of view. When you are in front of artistic creations of any kind which do not hold your attention because of confusion or repulsion caused by its formal structure, then a ready-made explanatory comment or interpretation can overcome the indifference or the reticence of the contemplator. In this case, the work does not matter; it remains in the shadow of the commentator that precedes or succeeds it. Of interest are the ideas that the artist would have wanted to transmit us. But does not the interposition of such interpretations between the artistic object and receiver distort the act of reception itself, which is strictly individual? Does not the artist try to show something else than can be said of creation? Of course, the answers to such questions engage very complex issues concerning the relation between the work and reality, the reception of art, and art's sense and value. Reducing these problematizations as far as possible, we can attempt an answer within the limits of the present theme by appealing to phenomenological aesthetics.

In Roman Ingarden's conception, for example, “works of art ... are intentional creations of a special type,”<sup>30</sup> whose ontic ground is constituted by the appropriate physical objects. This means that the work has a formal structure which constitutes its way of being, and a number of specific properties that exceed its features as an object. Beyond the formal, physical structure of the work, there is the author's intention to give artistic significance to the object in question – significance that is proposed to the public for deciphering. So, the artwork is not the painted canvas, printed text, or musical sound. These are only the forms which mediate the idea, the message, the attitude that the artist wants to convey to others. In other words, they are the elements which release the aesthetic emotion which the artistic objects manifest and renew. Constituting an aesthetic object is a very complicated process, maintains Ingarden, “and this itself will be the object

<sup>26</sup> See Roman Ingarden, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

<sup>27</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *op. cit.*, p. 6. (Romanian translated, p. 13).

<sup>28</sup> See Werner Hofmann, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>29</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 34, p. 48.

<sup>30</sup> Roman Ingarden, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

of aesthetic evaluation”<sup>31</sup> so that we can appreciate it as “beautiful,” or “ugly,” or as displaying other aesthetic values.

If the physical objects do have only “physical” qualities that are given through a sensory experience and are neutral from an emotional point of view, then works of art have artistic and aesthetic qualities which reveal the aesthetic value contained in their structure. More accurately, the aesthetic value is “a qualitative synthetic special moment, or an ensemble of aesthetically valuable qualities”<sup>32</sup> intrinsic to the aesthetic object.”<sup>33</sup>

In this context, it is appropriate to remark that, according to the same aesthetician, aesthetic value has a dual substantiation. On the one hand, it manifests itself in aesthetically valuable qualities of the concrete material, while on the other hand it manifests itself in the aesthetic-cognitive reception of the receiving subject, which is a personal and non-arbitrary act. The first level of this substantiation allows us to deduce whether or not an artistic object has assembled qualities which create aesthetic value. When such qualities, *ab initio* contested even by the author through his poetic program, are not retrieved in the structure of the object which claims a place in the kingdom of art, how can it be valued? It seems to us that Adorno gives a possible answer when he asserts that “it is outside the purview of aesthetics today whether it is to become art’s necrology; yet it must not play at delivering graveside sermons, certifying the end, savoring the past, and abdicating in favor of one sort of barbarism that is no better than the culture that has earned barbarism as recompense for its own monstrosity.”<sup>34</sup>

Concerning the second level of the substantiation already mentioned, the aesthetic value of the artwork does not depend on the evaluation. However, on the basis of his own aesthetic experiences, the subject-receiver can correctly appreciate an artistic creation, emphasizing the aesthetic value which gives it brilliance, or conversely he can fail to appreciate it, either because he overestimates it or does not grasp it. Here the

receptor’s aesthetic culture comes into play, a complex theme that we cannot clarify fully in a short article such as this one. What we can say, though, is that the evolution of the aesthetic value involves the common and consonant reaction of the artistic object and of the receiver’s perceptive acts.<sup>35</sup> Being itself reflexive, the artwork always remains “open” for the audience, challenging them to interpret and to decipher its aesthetic value, providing authentic joy and a new understanding of the truth of our existence in the world. As Heidegger says, in artwork, the truth is “the truth of being,” which sets itself and *appears*, and this appearance in the work is the beauty itself.<sup>36</sup>

In conclusion, it can be said that art as a spiritual modality of reporting the human to the world is not equal with itself. Its permanent evolution has experienced profound tensions and overcome many crises, always recovering and re-aligning itself with its time. Within this logic the de-aestheticization of art is circumscribed – the current negativist, contesting tendency, seeking frantically for new modalities of artistic expression in a society dominated by technology, utility, efficiency, and hedonism. Therefore, we do not find Hegel’s statement of 200 years ago viable, that art remains “something that belongs to the past.” Artistic creation continues to assert and diversify itself with an impressive energy. Accordingly, the de-aestheticization movement we are talking about is a challenge that gives new impulses to the evolution of authentic art. It will remain with us as a form of affectively perceiving and understanding reality, adding to it, as Nietzsche said, a metaphysical factor in order to transcend it.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 227.

<sup>33</sup> In Ingarden’s conception, beauty is not the general category of aesthetic values, but only one of their many qualities, which, in my opinion, requires more applied discussions.

<sup>34</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *op. cit.*, p. 4. (Romanian translation, p. 9).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Roman Ingarden, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>36</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *Originea operei de artă* (*The Origin of the Work of Art*), Romanian translation from German by Thomas Kleininger and Gabriel Liiceanu, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1995.

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