

Art History and Philosophy: Unraveling the Premises

Our paper consists of two parts. The first part is philosophical and the second one is art historical. In the first part, we are going to introduce the main ideas of contemporary analytic aesthetics. In the second part, we are going to analyze three examples from art history and try to show that these ideas can be applied. Our aim is to indicate the benefits and the need for collaboration between the fields of aesthetics and art history.

The background of analytic aesthetics is the general idea of analytic philosophy that the best approach to philosophical problems is the language analysis. By philosophical problems, we consider problems that can't be solved by empirical research. By analysis of language, we consider the examination of the logical structure of language. Every field with non-empirical problems and language can be the subject of analytic philosophy. We consider the art history as an area of research which includes praxes of interpretation, evaluation, analysis, enlightening, description, and contextualization. All these praxes yield philosophical problems at some point.

How can the philosophical debates be used in art history? Our answer is that they have the *regulative* function. In every judgment of an art historian, at least one philosophical premise is presupposed. The philosophy/art history collaboration would focus on explicating those premises and putting them in the wider context of philosophical debates. In that way, the problems could be localized and we could hope to find a solution.

We offer three examples from art history to illustrate our point. (I) The first point is about the definition of art. In the article about the first Impressionist exhibit in 1874, the author Joseph Vincent denies that the works he saw are artworks. In every proposition 'x is(n't) an artwork' there is a philosophical assumption that (a) there is a definition of art and (b) that x doesn't fall within it. The problem of definition of art appears with every new form of art that emerges. It can be better grasped using philosophy as it is by its nature a philosophical problem.

(II) The second example is about the autonomy of aesthetic value of an artwork. In every proposition 'X is bad artwork, because it is morally flawed' there is at least one philosophical assumption. Such propositions presuppose that art realm and moral realm are interconnected in such way that moral flaw can count as an aesthetic flaw and vice versa. A suitable example is Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph des Willens*, although many other examples from history of visual arts illustrate the same point.

(III) The third example is about the so-called *intentional fallacy*. We are going to illustrate this point using Ghada Amer's work *Anjie*, 2002. The problem is that interpreters who take into account direct pronouncements of intent, and those who don't, will reach different conclusions about the meaning of the artwork. Every proposition 'artwork has the meaning x, because the artist intended so', therefore, has at least one philosophical assumption.