

Interlacing Political Aesthetics with the exertion of Art

Adoney T. John & Dr. Joby Verghese

Research Scholar

Research Department of Political Science

Maharaja's College Ernakulam, Kerala,

Dr. Joby Verghese

Assistant Professor and Research Guide

Research Department of Political Science

Maharaja's College Ernakulam, Kerala.

Abstract

Art is occupied through aesthetics. Most important philosophical understanding- aesthetics derived through human evolution and the scale of apprehension of surroundings by humans itself. In political science, aesthetical sense is very important in designing democratic culture in the thoroughly changing world order. Aesthetics can be addressed as a political conditioning, the conditioning of recognition, acceptance, behavioral etc. Political aesthetics, called into being by Crispin Sartwell, attends to the aesthetic features of political science, that is, such things as political systems, and constitutions. Understanding politics, which is the place of power, of contestation between interests and interest groups, is incomplete without political aesthetics.

In his 1897-published book, *'What is Art?'* Leo Tolstoy described art as "one of the means of intercourse between man and man". We know this to be true when we're standing beside strangers in an art gallery or museum, gazing at an artist's work. You might overhear a discussion between patrons, one praising the artist's craftsmanship and the other criticizing its overarching message. As opposing as their responses may be, what transpires in this interaction is exactly what Tolstoy wrote about. The creator, the producer of the art, invites spectators to study his / her work, engage with it, learn from it, ask and ponder questions, leave it in a state of undress. History has observed that mankind has used art for a great number of distinct functions, which is why the purpose of art cannot be compressed into a single concept. Much like music and writing, art – in its own unique way – is created and enjoyed for different reasons.

Art is occupied through aesthetics. Most important philosophical understanding- aesthetics derived through human evolution and the scale of apprehension of surroundings by humans itself. In political science, aesthetical sense is very important in designing democratic culture in the thoroughly changing world order. Aesthetics can be addressed as a political conditioning, the conditioning of recognition, acceptance, behavioral etc. Political aesthetics, called into being by Crispin Sartwell, attends to the aesthetic features of political science, that is, such things as political systems, and constitutions. Understanding politics, which is the place of power, of contestation between interests and interest groups, is incomplete without political aesthetics.

The relationship between art and politics is not a new one, dating back to the early 1900s, perhaps further still. Prominent artists, such as Pablo Picasso, have used art as a medium of expressing their displeasure towards objectionable socio-political circumstances. When German and Italian warplanes bombed a village in northern Spain during the Spanish Civil War in 1937, Picasso responded by painting the atrocities of war and the suffering of civilians and communities in Guernica. Upon completion, his work made a brief trip around the world, publicizing the war to an international audience. Another example of an artist who found art instrumental in exposing cruelty is Susan Crile. She translated the images of American soldiers torturing and abusing prisoners at Abu Ghraib into drawings. Without sparing her audience, Crile's sketches, paired with short captions, are graphic and horrifying, showing that there was no justice in the inhumane treatment of Iraqi prisoners in Baghdad.

Progressive aesthetical structuring is inevitable in shaping to changes. Plato says that art imitates reality. The idea was still very strong in the Renaissance, when Vasari, in his *Lives of the Painters*, said that "painting is just the imitation of all the living things of nature with their colors and designs just as they are in nature." Poetry had created in-turns for many revolutions against autocrats. Aesthetical apprehension of the existing objects creates a sense of conceiving that same object into various forms. Most people still think that a picture must be a picture of something, and that an artist is someone who can make a picture that "looks just like the real thing". But that pictorial implication can be guided as a source of changes as in the cases of great jasmine revolution occurred in the Arab world. The self immolated Bouazizi's pictures were carried by angry mob and they protested against the dictatorial rule.

In the Republic, Plato says that art imitates the objects and events of ordinary life. In other words, a work of art is a copy of a copy of a Form. Counter to this regularizing, the romantic idea of overthrowing tyrannical oppression through violent uprisings which was first unleashed by the American and French Revolutions fired the imaginations of poets and artists. French painter Eugene Delacroix, the British poet Lord Byron, etc. became an ardent supporter of the Greeks during their war for independence (1821–29) against the Ottoman Empire. Many Europeans regarded the Greek uprising as an effort to reclaim the birthplace of democracy for Western civilization.

Plato saw the changing physical world as a poor, decaying copy of a perfect, rational, eternal, and changeless original. The beauty of a flower, or a sunset, a piece of music or a love affair, is an imperfect copy of Beauty Itself. But artists claim that if the original is being carried over in the name of authority, poetic ramifications can induce the call for return. In art, history is preserved in the service of narrative. A vehicle for the expression of thought, art can shape or reinforce the way we perceive events and issues that take place within society. A paradox in itself, art can reflect beauty, speaking to our longing to experience it. At the same time, art can reflect the despotic and the revolting, either driving us away or charging powerful emotions in us.

All of the arts move people powerfully. They can strongly influence our behaviour, and even our character. For that reason Plato insisted that music along with poetry and drama and the other arts, should be part of the education of young citizens in his ideal republic, but should be strictly censored to present, at first, only the good. That stories and images can shape character may seem obvious enough; but how does music do this? Plato was much impressed with the theories of Pythagoras, and his number mysticism. Early thinking about geometric ratios was partly inspired by noticing the series of overtones connected with the vibration of a string. A string, when plucked, vibrates along its whole length, but also in halves, giving the octave, and in other divisions which give the fifth, the third, and the rest of the overtone series. These are the bell-like higher tones string players produce when they play "harmonics". Plato thought that the right sort of music would help to set the soul in harmony rather than discord. But that meant excluding certain musical modes from the Republic, and keeping only those that were conducive to a properly ordered soul, i.e., one whose will ruled its passions at the direction of its reason. Only when young people were ready should the strength of their character be tested by exposing them to depictions of evil, and to the more promiscuous modes of music.

Art is a key element in contemporary social activism because more often than not, it takes visuals to get an important message across. Through this medium of communication, avant-garde artists can produce knowledge and interact with un-savoury political systems. Furthermore, art activism is a visual representation of what's already embedded in us. It speaks to our frustration, hoping to empower us to do something about it. When dialogue isn't possible in socio-political conflicts, art steps in to protest. Call it a creative dissent; an intimate encounter between freedom of speech and artistic expression.

References

- 1: A.E. Heath, "Analogy as a Scientific Tool," The Rationalist Annual (1947), pp. 51-58
- 2: E.M. Hafner, "The New Reality in Art and Science," Comparative Studies in Social History, 11 (1969), pp. 385-97.
- 3: I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave, Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- 4: W.I. Homer, Seurat and the Science of Painting, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1964
- 5: 7 Karl Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, New York, Basic Books, 1962
- 6: Geoffrey Lapage, Art and the Scientist, Bristol, John Wright and Sons, 1961