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Touching Imagination of Blind People: A Philosophical Perspective of Art

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Abstract: The cardinal aim of this article is to explore the philosophical elements in the literary scholarship of art and design by taking into account the specific theoretical perspectives and frameworks of representation, expressionism, form, and aestheticism. The relationship between art and philosophy is of great importance. In this study, the main objective of the researcher is to divulge blind people's way of perceiving as well as imagining this world. The panoramic view of such people's minds is portrayed in the particular artwork that is carried out on the basic parameters of the philosophy of art. The research also indicates how a piece of artwork in the domain of art and design can be proved very helpful as a tool to create as well as understand a particular situation while having some specific meanings. The symbolic and thematic concerns of the philosophy of artwork are also part of this research. This study concludes that the philosophy of art can help to depict a nice piece of artwork that can be further explored and analyzed while taking into account some particular critical approaches such as representation, expression, firmness, and aestheticism to unearth the hidden meanings, themes, and symbols. The symbolic significance of artworks within the paradigms of philosophy has never been ignored in any era.

Introduction

The prime concern of this article revolves around the exploration of philosophical elements in the literary scholarship of art and design by taking into account the specific theoretical perspectives and frameworks of representation, expressionism, form, and aestheticism. Since the beginning of this world, philosophy in every field of knowledge is playing a crucial role in terms of the comprehension as well as working of this world. In the same way, various kinds of philosophical approaches are used in the arena of art and design in order to convey and then

understand the fundamental purposes of the creation of different artworks. The relationship between art and philosophy is of great importance. In our contemporary changing modern world order, the field of art and design and the production of artworks are progressing day by day, due to which the philosophical tools, which are used in the interpretation of these artworks, are also developing. Mostly, the development in the course of art and design and artworks is witnessed to be enhanced in the modern era when different philosophical French

approaches have been used to investigate such works. Before the illustration of philosophy in the field of art and design, it is important to elucidate the basic concept of art.

Oliver (2020) expresses that “any product or range of creative human activity can be understood as art” (Oliver, 2020, p. 1). Another critic Stephen Davies states that the concept of art can be defined “as a medium that transmits some particular feelings, a form of representation or imitation and any particular intuitive expression or significant form (Davies, 2013, p. 7). It is also important to mention that changing practices, heritage, and social and historical settings also play a key role in the production of art or artist. Tiziana, in her article *What is Art?: The Question of Definition Reloaded* mentions the types of art and claims that the most associated art is visual art which is comprised of sculpture and painting (Tiziana, 2017, p. 6).

In the present paper, my basic aim is to take into account the relationship between philosophy and artworks, i.e., how various philosophical methodologies are used in order to interpret as well as analyze a piece of art. In the course of art and design, philosophies of representation, expressionism, form, and aestheticism are very helpful tools that are used to discuss any piece of artwork in the forms of paintings and sculptures or any other particular form. Some specific big ideas which contribute a lot to shaping our lives and our ways of thinking are looked upon in the subject of philosophy; these ideas are comprised of the elements of existence, good and bad, right and wrong, and meaning and truth.

Both philosophy and art are always in a continuous process of development while changing their shape and form from one point to another. At the same time, it can also be observed that every time some specific purposes or meanings are hidden behind the changing forms of art and artworks, which give birth to new philosophies of art. The symbolic significance of

artworks within the paradigms of philosophy has never been ignored in any era.

Literature Review

This section of the article is based on the available literature related to the association between art and philosophy coupled with the conceptual framework in terms of theoretical dimensions. A literature review gives a comprehensive understanding of already present literature in a particular field. In order to get a better understanding of the exploration of the relationship between philosophy and art, it is necessary to analyze the available literature in this field of knowledge. Carroll, in his seminal book *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction*, mentions his viewpoints on the concept of philosophy and states that “the word philosophy has different meanings” (Carroll, 2012, p. 2), but usually, people talk about the philosophy of their life which means they tell about their core socio-cultural beliefs. On the other hand, when philosophy is discussed within the paradigms of art and design because here it is taken as “a certain academic discipline” (Carroll, 2012, p. 2). Various school of philosophy is comprised of feminism, existentialism, Marxism, deconstructionism, phenomenology, etc., but philosophy in the field of art and design is termed as *analytical philosophy* in which different approaches such as expressionism, impressionism, and representation, form, symbolism, and aestheticism are used to interpret artworks. It is important to mention that the secondary data in the form of different articles, unpublished theses, book reviews, newspapers, books, and interviews are analyzed to comprehend the analysis in a proficient way. There is much literature available on the subject of art and design and philosophy, but only relevant literature is analyzed in this current research work.

Parsons (2015), in his groundbreaking book entitled *The Philosophy of Design*, takes into

account “the fundamental philosophical issues raised by the contemporary practice of design” (Parsons, 2015, p. 4). A range of philosophical areas, such as ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, and aesthetics, are also investigated by him. Written in an accessible style, *The Philosophy of Design* presents a new perspective on design and a provocative reassessment of the Modernist legacy. It engages the readers and critics with current philosophical debates, helping them to bring into clearer focus the meaning of contemporary design and its unique challenges and possibilities.

Hospers (2016), in his article *Philosophy of Art*, explores the understanding of philosophy and art, as he states that “philosophy of art, the study of the nature of art, including concepts such as interpretation, representation, and expression, and form. It is closely related to aesthetics, the philosophical study of beauty and taste” (Hospers, 2016, p. 2). According to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, “representation is a necessary condition of art” (Carroll, 2012, p. 10). Lentricchia and McLaughlin (1995) in their thought-provoking book *Critical Terms for Literary Studies* point out the idea of representation and assert that it is “the use of signs that stand in for and take the place of something else” (Lentricchia & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 3). They also state that the organization of this world, as well as reality, are constructed “through the act of naming its elements” (Lentricchia & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 3). In this regard, the concept of *representation* plays a vital as well as pivotal role in the interpretation of artworks when these are investigated through the application of a particular philosophy.

Philips (2018), in his significant article *Art vs. Design – A Timeless Debate* takes into account a comprehensive explanation of art in terms of its philosophical terms and states that “art exists and has existed in every known human culture and consists of objects, performances, and experiences that are intentionally endowed by

their makers with a high degree of aesthetic interest” (Philips, 2018, p. 1). Because of this definition, it can be argued that design is also a part of an art in which experiences, objects, and performances are intentionally instilled. Here, at this point, it is important to mention that “a certain degree of abstraction” (Hospers, 2016, p. 4) is always involved in representation, which means that one or more characteristics of the original are taken away.

In the philosophy of art, especially in the field of art and design, the subject matter is also another significant factor that possesses a lot of importance in terms of the comprehension of artworks. This idea of subject matter can be understood in the field of art and design in various ways. Subject matter helps to know about the true or basic creation of the artwork, i.e., it “signifies basically what the work is about” p 4). The *work* can be in any form of art, which can be further interpreted through the application of various theoretical approaches. When artworks in the form of paintings and sculptures are taken in the meanings of representational content, then these can possess a particular kind of subject matter. Representations such as men, trees, industries, blood, etc., in sculptures and paintings are easily identifiable subject matters.

According to the fundamental ideas of Mitchell (1995) related to the philosophy of art, arts works having representational contents, in addition to various or one subject matter, can also have subject matter in the form of themes which are often known “as underlying ideas” (Mitchell, 1995, p. 30). These themes work efficiently in the construction of hidden meanings when depicted in artworks. The basic message or point of view of the author, painter, or designer is embedded in the hidden meanings or themes.

In the same way, the philosophy of art also includes the presence of symbols in artworks. A symbol that is represented in the artwork “can be in the form of an action, an object, or an

incessant structure of actions and objects” (Carroll, 2012, p. 26). Even the representation of a symbol can be expressed in the form of “a nonrepresentational item such as a line or a color” (p. 27). Like themes, symbols are also crucial additions in the artworks that make a difference between a piece of writing or artwork and ordinary writing or designs. A particular kind of vital quality is induced in a work of art when it is constructed on specific intentions as a symbol.

Since the beginning of the 19th century, the concept of art as an imitation has not only been challenged but also moribund after the development of the course or field of art and design in literary domains. The social as well as cultural changes in the modern era have worked as a driving force in challenging this viewpoint regarding art as a mode of imitation. The alternative theory or counter-discourse, which was given in response to the objection of art as imitation, was that “art is an expression” (p. 31). Art as a mode of expression is used to express the internal world or “inner state of the artist” (p. 33) as compared to the external world or outer state or observation of the artist. The cardinal focus of the philosophy of art within the domains of expressionism is that it focuses on the exploration of the hidden or internal world, i.e., it “seems to be implicit in the core meaning of the expression” (Philips, 2018, p. 2) which can be taken as “the outer manifestation of an inner state” (p. 3). In the field of art and design, art should be understood “as an inner expression of humans’ inner life” (p. 3). The creation of a work of art is the bringing about of a new combination of elements in the medium, such as tones in music, words in literature, paints on canvas, and so on. The elements existed beforehand but not in the same combination; creation is the re-formation of these pre-existing materials.

In the philosophy of art, a specific creation occurs in various art mediums is an obvious truth. But once this is granted, nothing has yet been said about expression, and the

expressionist would say that the foregoing statement about creation is too mild to cover what needs to be said about the process of artistic creation. The creative process, the expressionist wants to say, is an expressive process, and for expression, something more is necessary than the artist creating something. Great care must be taken at this stage: some say that the creation of art is self-expression; others say that it is the expression of feeling, though not necessarily of one’s own feeling or perhaps that and something more, such as the feeling of one’s race, or of one’s nation, or of all humanity; others say that it is not necessarily limited to feelings but that ideas or thoughts can be expressed, as they clearly are in essays.

Material and Methods

This assignment is carried out using some specific kinds of materials as well as methods. As far as the elements of materials are concerned, the researcher used a canvas on which acrylic paints were used in order to portray different paintings. The nature of this research is analytical, as the discussion and analysis are purely interpreted according to the researchers’ points of view. The portraits have been analyzed within the paradigms of the concept. Some articles, books, and opinions related to my assignment have been used as secondary data in order to get a deep understanding of the topic. It is also important to mention that this research work is based on a theoretical perspective, and the nature of the research is purely qualitative. Qualitative analysis is not part of this study.

Analysis and Discussions

The artwork that is portrayed by a researcher is mentioned as follows. It is based on the parameters of the philosophy of art within the specific perspectives of representation, expression, and aestheticism.

Figure

Artwork, Oil on canvas, 2023, (Rohail Rahat)



Researchers portrayed the artwork on a canvas that truly explores the philosophy of art within the particular paradigms of representation, expression, form, and aesthetics. As a matter of fact, this artwork is based on the imagination of blind people and their way of perceiving as well as imagining this world and the people living around them. The panoramic view of such people's lives can be seen in the artwork. Here, at this point, it is important to mention that this artwork is not representing only one specific thinking and imagination of one's inner mind but also various aspects of life. Through the philosophical perspectives of art, my artwork shows the mind of blind people that is always in flux.

According to the philosophy of representation in the literary scholarship of art, it is necessary that one characteristic or more is involved as compared to the original in the depiction of my artwork. The apparent look of the artwork clearly indicates that a certain degree of abstraction is part of it which is necessary for the representation of my basic thoughts in terms of the portrayal of the working of blind people's way of imagining or perceiving this world. When the philosophy of art is explored while taking into account the idea of expression, then it also is noticed that the above-mentioned artwork reflects the inner working, which can be investigated from two perspectives; on the one

hand, the inner working of my mind, on the other hand, the exploration of the inner state of the blind people.

As the fundamental ideas of the philosophy of art, it is very difficult to present the exact working of one's mind because the works of art cannot be depicted exactly according to the complex working of the mind. The same thing can be witnessed that my artwork is also indicating the flux mind of blind people. The yellowish lines in the artwork are represented in symbolic ways. As a matter of fact, the segments of yellowish lines presented in the artwork are the roof that the mind cannot work in a static way. Therefore, these are replicating the fragments of blind people's minds, i.e., the way they perhaps imagine the working of this world.

In art, at least, expression requires a medium, a medium that is recalcitrant and that artist must bend to their will. "Artists don't know what they are going to express until they have expressed it" (Mitchell, 1995, p. 38) is a watchword of the expressionist. They cannot state in advance what a completed work of art will be like. What distinguishes art from craft is that the artist, unlike the craftsman, "does not know the end in the beginning" (p. 38). What distinguishes creation from all other things is that it results in a new combination of elements, and it is not known in advance what this combination will be.

The presentation or addition of multi-colors in the background of this artwork are also conveying the symbolic significance as they represent the view when a normal, not abnormal, man's eye shows when it is closed. Again, at this point, it is crucial to highlight that even these colors possess the element of abstraction, i.e., one or more steps away from the original view. This kind of going away is necessary for artworks to make them enticing and mind grabbing, and curious for the critics. As far as the aesthetic dimensions of this artwork are concerned, these are also obvious in this artwork. The moment we see the artwork, its beauty creates a good

impression on our mind because this is the true depiction of a particular situation in which the rules explaining the philosophy of art have been given much importance. The form of the artwork is also very compact as well as comprehensive, which plays its role in making thing portrayal of a piece of art in the field of art and design.

The central figure of a man in the artwork is exploring a scene when a man closes his eyes, and so many different ideas come into his mind and the view that he/she imagines and perceive about a specific thing while closing his eyes. Different pictures of men, women, and children in the different sections of yellowish lines are also representing as well as expressing the fragmented picture of blind people's minds. According to the philosophy of art, the patchy inclusion of various people is the subject matter of my artwork because this is the central point that shows that I have represented or expressed the inner working of a blind man. The hands also carry a great deal of importance in this regard because these are the hands that are symbolic and have thematic concerns. They are divulging the fact that people who cannot see try to recognize the different things in this world through the touch of their hands. It is a common practice that is used by blind men whenever they want to recognize something. This something can be a living or non-living entity. The hands also help blind people to come to know about the facial expression or to understand the texture of anything, and therefore, in the artwork, it can be seen that the hands are moving in different directions in order to assess a particular thing. The black color in the artwork reflects, represents, and expresses the inability of blind people's minds to make an ideas about some complex things.

Conclusion

This research establishes that an artwork can be portrayed while following the fundamental rules of the philosophy of art. The present study truly

indicates the application of the philosophy of art while having a focus on the elements of representation, expression, form, and aestheticism. The main objective of the researcher was to explore blind people's way of perceiving as well as imagining this world. The panoramic view of such people's minds is portrayed in the particular artwork that is carried out on the basic parameters of the philosophy of art. It can also be seen that paintings and sculptures, as a form of art in the domain of art and design, are very helpful tools to create as well as understand a particular situation. The basic theoretical concerns related to representation, expression, form, and aestheticism have been taken into account in order to portray a particular situation, such as the working of blind people's ability in the present study. Therefore, it can be argued that the philosophy of art can help to depict a nice piece of artwork that can be further explored and analyzed while taking into account some particular critical approaches.

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