

Aesthetics, Freedom and State in Hegel's Philosophy

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Abstract : Many scholars consider Hegel's philosophy of art as the greatest theory of aesthetics since Aristotle's Poetics. 'Freedom' distinguishes modern, especially German Idealism with Greek philosophy. Therefore, introducing and contemplating on Hegel's Aesthetics as a whole, freedom as the essence of art, Hegel's controversial claim on the end of art, and the relation of art and state is the main theme of this study. Hegel's aesthetics is to be understood in his whole system. According to Hegel's speculative philosophy, being is to be understood as self-determining Reason or Idea. The self-determining Reason actualizes and realizes himself in the course of history. Idea in the process of self-actualization becomes more and more rational. It first actualizes itself in matter, then in non-conscious life, finally in conscious and self-conscious life. Self-conscious life is the most rational stage of development of Idea in which the subject can think and imagine, use language and exercise freedom. Hegel calls this self-conscious life Spirit (Geist). Therefore, emergence of human being is an essential moment in the process of self-determination of Reason. It is not accidental rather a necessity. The essence of spirit is freedom. Since the history is the process of the self-actualization of spirit, humankind becomes more and more, free. Spirit in its 'Absolute' form manifests itself into three forms; Art, Religion and philosophy. Art is the first stage in which Spirit understands itself. In fact, Art is the expression of human spirit, which is comprehended by our senses. Beauty is defined as the sensuous expression of free Spirit. The purpose of art is, therefore, to express, enjoy and contemplate on our freedom. State belongs to the realm of Objective spirit, while Art along with Religion and philosophy belong to the realm of Absolute Spirit. Absolute spirit is superior to Objective Spirit; therefore, state must not interfere in the realm of art. Limitation on art by state directly violates freedom and prevents development of national spirit. Genuine art leads us to freedom and richness of (national) Spirit. Using Hegel's philosophy of art, we can comprehend why totalitarian states try to limit art and, why artists are the enemy of totalitarian states. In this philosophical system, we contemplate on art as a way to freedom and emancipation.

Keywords : aesthetics, freedom, spirit, state

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