Your Name

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How does art enrich, explain, and define the human person- or does it?

There is no clear-cut fencing regarding the standards of beauty and the basis for its subjective evaluation. Different people experiencing a particular work of art have contrasting and varying opinions about it. The value of art and its masterpieces has the same niche in an individual’s life as of any other concept which has profound meaning and affects a person in his daily struggles. The classical Greek era was instrumental in laying the foundations of Western philosophy and the simultaneous creation and appreciation of art was also introduced at that time. According to Tolstoy, art is essentially a human activity and the external stimuli are conveyed by one person to another and the second person lives those feelings again. Eliciting emotion and unconventional attitudes in human beings, art is one of the many styles of expression. Although Aristotle developed the meaning of art in a very different way, he was chiefly influenced by his teacher, Plato who largely regarded art as a form of imitation. Plato opined in his seminal work, Republic, that if there is an ordinary bed in consideration, it is merely an abstraction of the actual form of bed and its true essence. Similarly, the painter does not depict or delineate the actual meaning of the images they paint and their representations of art lack truth and genuineness. Aristotle, while discussing the nature of linguistic poetry and its relation to human beings believes that art is inter-linked with poetry. He also stipulates that there is an active and fundamental relationship between human nature and various manifestations of art. Plato on the other hand, postulated that art has no capability to contain any shred of truth and it cannot pave the way for mankind to know what is true. Aristotle took a didactic approach in this regard and believed that the delight arising from imitation is nearly identical to the delight that human beings take from knowledge and learning. This point of view also manifests itself from different experiences of human beings, the reason of extracting delight from a process of visually seeing something is similar to the process of learning something and gathering meaning from a piece of art.

In different locales and in different times, art has sprung up independent of the prevailing cultural and social conditions. The origins of art and mankind can be traced back to something similar, something which is also common in its essence. Since the eighteenth century, art is perceived as a potential source for pleasure which is distinct from the practices of utilitarian or practical advantages. These practices also involved religious or socially moral contemplations, therefore many religious scholars have continued to condemn various expressions of art, for instance music and dance. Certain interpretations of the theories of aesthetics propounded by Immanuel Kant also propagate the idea that art is an event for contemplation that does not involve the elements of interest. Some philosophers also believe that there are no such things as a persistent and enduring acts of nature displayed by human beings. The believers of Marxism also believe that humankind is habitual to create its own essence through repeated and monotonous practices and by the virtue of these repeated habits, mankind secures its existence and lays the foundation of a conducive environment for its future generations. For this purpose, art plays a pivotal role in the pursuit of human beings to leave something for their offspring in the form of material memories. There is also a great distrust in the human nature according to many philosophical schools of thought, and one of the direct implications of this distrust is that art is the only possible solution left for the enrichment and explanation of the human existence.

There is a quote by Immanuel Kant describing the universality in beauty and art,

“If someone is ‘conscious that his delight in an object is with him independent of interest’, then he will inevitably look on the object as one containing a ground of delight for all men, (Cottingham 717)

During the eighteenth century, there was a spark of great intrigue and interest in the root causes of our sense of beauty and much of this instigation was the work of a Scottish philosopher and thinker Frances Hutcheson. Comparing the sense of beauty with the relatively ordinary senses of hearing and sight, Hutcheson maintained that the sense of beauty arising from encountering various works of art enriches the human existence and crucially defines that what it is to be a human. The idea that art and aesthetic experiences are cherished only for their own sakes does not align with the understanding of the human nature. Stress relief, learning, provision of beauty, provoking of emotions are some of the ways art enriches the human life and motivates individuals to break the monotony of their everyday struggles and pursue something for the growth of their minds. Since the advent of mankind, art has existed in one form or another and the principles of valuing art are universal in everyone on this earth, but there are only a few people who are qualified enough to pass a better judgment on the sentiments regarding the socially acceptable standards of beauty and art. According to Hutcheson,

‘When the critic has no delicacy, he judges without nay distinction, and is only affected by the grosser and more palpable qualities of the object: the finer touches pass unnoticed and disregarded, (Cottingham 715).”

# Works Cited

Cottingham, John G. *Western Philosopy: An Anthology*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2007.