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AESTHETICS OF HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

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In my paper I analyse the possibility of the dialogue between aesthetics and history. I seek to substantiate the thesis which maintains that immediate experience of the past has aesthetic nature. The interrelation of historical and aesthetical experience is profoundly analysed in the works by Ankersmit, who is an outstanding representative of “the new intellectual history”. There is always a metaphor in any traditional historical narration, as a rule it is either optical or spatial, for example, the metaphorical image of “the river of time”. Ankersmit holds that only “decontextualised past” broken into separate, complete fragments

can be the real object of the historical experience. An event is a local structuralised being, whole process consisting of the beginning, culmination and completion. An event is born out of aesthetic experience.

Key words: aesthetics, sublime, nostalgia, historical experience, postmodernism

Introduction

The relationship between historical and aesthetic experience is profoundly analyzed by an outstanding representative of “new intellectual history” F.R. Ankersmit.

Franklin Rudolf Ankersmit is a Dutch philosopher, one of the outstanding figures of postmodernism period in the philosophy of history.

He was born in 1945 in The Netherlands, studied physics and mathematics for three years in Leiden.

Afterwards he studied both history and philosophy in Groningen. He received his PhD in philosophy in 1981. Since then he has held different positions at the History Department of Groningen University.

Now he is Professor for intellectual history and historical theory at that same University and a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of the Sciences.

Professor Ankersmit has made contributions to contemporary aesthetics, philosophy of history, and to historical method through his analysis and use of the concepts of narrative, metaphor, and representation.

Ankersmit's volumes on Historical Representation and Political Representation for the *Cultural Memory in the Present* series for Stanford University Press are examples of his work in these areas.

His works have been translated into German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Polish, Finnish, Turkish, Chinese and other languages.

Historic narration

Ankersmit's name is usually associated with the concept of linguistic and narrative turn in the history.

He claims that in the historic narration the past is constructed, but not projected.

We can point out the following main questions found in his works:

- What is a historic narration?
- What is its structure?
- Is there the past without a historian's narration?

In the foreword to the second Russian edition of "History and Tropology" written in 2008, Ankersmit explains the way his interests developed, he writes: 'I have to begin the story of the history with its end - with experience - and then move towards the beginning - to narration and representation'.

There is always a metaphor in a traditional historic narration; as a rule, it is either optical or spacious, for example, a metaphorical image of the "river of the time".

It is the metaphor that defines the choice of a single statement and creates the frame within which the images of the past are reproduced. It is a kind of a compass showing the direction and defining the tone of the perception of the past.

Separate moments, 'the atoms' of history take a definite place in the Infinite chain of events, and they are submitted to this sequence, that is why the contacts with the past remain indirect and intermittent.

Historic experience

Ankersmit claims that only "the decontextualized past" fallen into separate and complete fragments can be the true object of the historic experience. An event is a local, structured entity, unbroken process, having the beginning, climax and completion.

An event stems from aesthetic experience. Moods and feelings which are a certain background, landscape' of emotional life define the place where the present changes into the past (and vice versa).

Ankersmit believes it is a mistake to think that first there is the past and then its perception. The past experience and the past itself appear simultaneously.

Subjectivity is the only way to objectivity. Subjective learning of history assumes personality's active role: without love to the subject one can have only information about it, but not the knowledge about it. The true knowledge arises as an insight belonging to the compassionate experience of love.

Ankersmit clarifies an aesthetic component of historic knowledge: "The way we feel the past is likely to be even more important than what we know about it."⁶

The idea of both a historian and an artist stems from the mental shock. At the moments when all his life power is concentrated, a historian feels himself or herself a part of what they are describing, their personal experience being a driving force of their insights.

A historian's aim is not only to reconstruct a historic epoch in its rhythms and borders, but also to create their own model with their parameters of the event. The author's activity changes the situation; the reality is not reconstructed, but it is filled with new meaning, contents and importance.

Ankersmit points out the paradox nature of historic experience: the 'recipient' of the past experience is one who is a historian, artist and philosopher at the same time.

The perception of the past is immediate, beyond any existing historic or historiographic tradition, but it is only a historian having profound knowledge who is sensitive to it.

Historic experience is accessible at any moment of life: the past suddenly comes down "as meteorite rain". Everything around us at present moves aside, the world narrows to the concrete recollection expressed in the act of nostalgia. The term "nostalgia" comes from two Greek words: *nostos* meaning coming home and *algos* meaning suffering, and it is used in the following meanings: 1) homesickness; 2) the pain about the past, experienced and lost. The person's dissatisfaction with himself or herself or with the relationships with the world around is the essence of nostalgia. Nostalgia is endless and it is reflected in our

daily life, arts, philosophy and it often happens to be an unconscious motivation for historians, helping to identify' the past in oneself and oneself in the past.

The nostalgic experience is sudden, immediate and it cannot be put off.

The conventional borders between a personality and outer reality disappear, there is a gap between "now", "before" and "then", the past and the present join for a moment as in the situations *deja vue*.

In its essence, nostalgia is the experience of a loss, and temporal remoteness is the additional, or rather accidental feature. A nostalgic experience is "the gift of the moment" and it can be neither prolonged, nor repeated, nor imitated at a will,

In the light of a direct experience, even the most common objects lose their natural character, that is why we can only guess what is important in our life and it is the future that will discover it.

Conclusion

The loss of the past and its oblivion are the conditions under which one enters a new world, finds his or her identity.

The enforced rejection from the traditional, habitual world is accompanied by the feeling of a heavy loss, the decline of culture.

New identity is mainly constructed by the shock one receives after his or her identity has been lost, and it is here that its main meaning is found.

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