

## Projective Aesthetics as a Possible World\*

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**Abstract:** The notion of “projective aesthetics” is considered in this paper for the first time as a variant of the recourse to praxis that characterizes contemporary aesthetics and its “aesthetic involvement” (A. Berleant). Projective aesthetics involves the use of methodologies of a new type: “schizoanalysis” (in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s terms), “conceptivism” (as devised by M. Epstein) and “projectivism”. The emphasis is put on the principle of “rhizome” and on the features of so-called “culturronics”, a way of thinking “through projects” in the cultural sphere. Projective aesthetics implies a way of philosophizing about art and aesthetics which is defined by a functional orientation in terms of a process of aestheticization and artification, and, accordingly, of projectivity. The connection between projective aesthetics and the peculiarities of modern communicative aesthetics is also examined, together with the need for creating a philosophical glossary of artistry and modern art, meant as a relevant project for aesthetics. In the text, a special place is also given to a number of projects implemented in the process of teaching philosophical aesthetics, as related to beauty as well as with the direct participation of students in filling out the contents of the above-mentioned glossary.

**Keywords:** projective aesthetics, aesthetic engagement, rhysome, culturronics, conceptivism, discourse of lecturing in aesthetics, glossary of projective artistic.

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In contemporary aesthetics, there is a situation when the former methodologies such as analytics, systematics, hermeneutics, and deconstruction, though they still exist, fail to grasp the situation of temporality of culture and art. These challenges of our time need not only an assessment but rather a new, practically oriented, theoretical vision.

In this regard, we introduce the concept of “*projective aesthetics*” (Orlov, 2015, p. 43), and its conceptual marking is not so much important as its trend towards grasping the peculiarities of a *new discourse*.

The *discourse*, in this case, is understood as the whole sum of “talkings” on philosophical and aesthetic themes in the aspect of “aesthetic involvement” in the praxis of everyday life.

Let us clarify what a new theoretical and methodological context, which underlies the discourse, represents here.

First, what Deleuze and Guattari (2010) have done can be named “schizoanalysis” in their own terminology. Without getting into all the details of their “schizoesthetics”, let us examine, perhaps, the most important notion – “the principle of the rhizome”. We are talking about the “rootstock”, from which everything grows, and not from the root of power structures. “Don't bring out the General in you!” – this slogan from the famous aesthetic manifesto of the brilliant French opposes the creativity of the rhizomatic connection of “wasp - and – orchid”, when a new quality appears. It is thanks to the rhizome – through the intertwinement with the world in its rootstock – the structure becomes flexible, reaching the level of post – and, more important, trans – structure. An authoritative rigidity deadens, escape from the

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hard structure (“the line of escape”, according to Deleuze and Guattari) gives it life. The rhizome is rhizomatic in its essence generating a new entity that has not existed before.

Second, the significance of *conceptivistic methodology* should be taken into account. “*CONCEPTIVISM – the philosophy of ‘conceiving concepts’, a constructive activity of thinking in the sphere of notions and universals. Like constructionism [...], conceptivism acknowledges the ‘constructiveness’, the conceptual purpose of ‘reality’. However, its task is not to criticize or demystify these constructs, but to generate them creatively, to create multiple models of possible worlds, cognitive and social practices [...] Conceptivism opens a new era of thinking that inherits the Kantian criticism and, at the same time, goes beyond those ‘critical’ functions with which post-Kantian philosophy has limited itself to a large extent. If criticism restricts the limits of theoretical mind, then conceptivism comes from within these limits, and crosses them over and over [...]*” (Epstein, 2013). Thus, the concepts of, for example, the “open-type” system and the “digital online” system become crucial for projective aesthetics. We will dwell on this topic further.

Third, and most important, it is essential to think *projectively*.

Considering that contemporary culture has drastically changed its vector in the direction opposite to Post - Post - Post..., in other words, in the direction of *proteism* (Epstein, 2013), the importance of *projectivism* for contemporary discourse in the humanities can be indicated. In his *Projective Philosophical Dictionary* Epstein distinguishes contemporary “cultural studies from culturronics”.

Culturronics is “[...] *the construction of new activity forms in culture, new techniques of communication and learning, new models of perception and creativity. If cultural studies thinks in **projections**, or interpretations of objects in symbolic systems of different cultures, then culturronics thinks in **projects**, in other words, in symbolic systems that have not yet become practices and institutions of any culture and form a plan for possible transformations of the whole cultural field?*” (Epstein, 2013).

The problem of praxis can be solved through “intelligent design” if we call it in the spirit of conceptivism. We are talking about projection and its corresponding methodologeme when thinking in projects and constructing reality on this basis become dominant. However, design here is not a technique (though it is important). More significant are existential projects of being that can arise on a technical basis. It is clear that, for example, the Internet, in this case, is not creative in itself, as we have repeatedly seen, doing there mostly communication par excellence.

So, there are *rhizome, concepts and projects*, among which it is *projectivity* that, especially concerning aesthetics, allows us to understand it *practically*, that is, in the aspect of “*aesthetic engagement*” (Berleant, 2013, p.10). Unlike classical *aesthetic disinterestedness and analytics* in this regard (Kant, 1966), Arnold Berleant, basing mainly on John Dewey's *pragmatism* (Dewey, 1980), drew attention to the inclusion of aesthetic experience in human everyday life and its potential in this connection.

The idea that the interest in praxis is now particularly important for our aesthetics, has revealed itself through thoughtful analysis not only of what is now highly topical in the methodological field but also of the very object of aesthetics, the interpretation of which directly depends on its functionality.

If we turn to the history of aesthetics, the main question here is not one of its object or even methodology, but the question of why do we need aesthetics? Without getting into details of this complicated story, let us put forward a hypothesis that states as follows: if the object of aesthetics in some advanced version should coincide with its transition to the variant of praxis, it turns out that its focus on the *aesthetic and artistic* sets its main trend of functionality. In this regard, the main thing from the perspective of its purpose is the *aestheticization and artification of being* at some other level but in the direct connection with the aesthetic and artistic. If by the aesthetic and artistic one understands the whole

experience of this type, then the *aestheticization and artification* can be understood as something that at least contributes to making this experience meaningful and vital, and in a unique, individual, free, genuine way, that is, in the strategeme of existential modus of being. The problem of projectivity of our being can be solved only by ourselves when we try not only to find the meaning of our life but to suggest a solution that has aesthetic and artistic projectivity of being.

Anyone who philosophizes on aesthetic themes is already, willingly or unwillingly, in this *discourse*. So the main thing for them is not only a question of what is beauty or what is art, and they do not “exist” (if not taking into account the archaic theoretical disputes about the plurality of their practices) but how to bring, for example, beauty or artistry in their own life, and, therefore, in life itself, how to connect what is given to you and only to you because of your own uniqueness with the Formation of Being (according to Heidegger) or with the Flow of Creation of Being (according to “I Ching”).

For us, the most important question is about the criteria of what is *aestheticization and artification* as the limit of meaning, which is associated with philosophizing on the “aesthetic interpretation” of our being. Put simply, we are talking about for what – in the limit – they are needed in praxis and what should be done with them so that they would allow implementing the practical transition from the rank of theory to the rank of praxis, that is, to the “*engaged aesthetics*”.

Apparently, the ultimate aesthetic meaning of our being is in the *pleasure (taste)*, and the artistic meaning is in the *otherbeingness (potentiation)*. Their absence means the absence of meaning – meaninglessness, which has no prospects for further development of being and, therefore, its alienation. And so, the meaning of *aestheticization and artification* is to saturate our life to the maximum (or, at least, to the minimum) in this practical connection, and by means of peculiarities of its activity. An ability to aesthetic taste and potentiate being is peculiar to projective aesthetics.

*The aesthetics of projectivism* involves a number of projects, relating to the sphere of theory and to the actual projects. The aesthetics of the environment<sup>1</sup>, everyday aesthetics (Saito, 2010), somaesthetics (Shusterman, 2013), the art of life (Dziemidok, 2017), contemporary art practices (Lisovetc, 2015; Milani, 2017), media aesthetics<sup>2</sup> and so on suggest projects that would evidently provoke the creation of *aestheticization and artification* in the real life, and it should be, of course, synchronous to what is happening now in the cultural world. According to Moisey Kagan's (2001, p. 4) accurate observation, here we can speak about the “*aesthetic sphere*” of culture.

*Aestheticization and artification* (or, more euphonically, *aesthesis and arthesis* in their interconnection and, first of all, not just in the functionality, but also in their ontologic entity) assume an existential projection. So to say, this is an “*aesthetic design*”, which will be the “*final project*” in the situation of here-and-now philosophizing “on aesthetic themes” for someone who is immersed in this experience right now. The theme of the “*final project*” is very important and directs the *theme of Sartre's “initial project”* towards the future. The “final” here is what you can do now, self-performing transformations of your being on the basis of your existence, your “initial project”. This is not only a verbal discourse but also an attempt to make a real statement in terms of going beyond the marginal limits (transgression) towards creating a symbolic reality. And it is not just a culture that is treated like an aesthetic sphere, it is rather a transculture and the unconscious, not only personal or collective, but “*transpersonal*” (Grof, 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. *Ekologicheskaya estetika: problemy i granicy*, 2014; *Estetika chelovecheskoj sredy*, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. *Media: mezhdú magiej i tekhnologij*, 2014.

If we come closer to praxis, then we will be talking about attempts to transform a sensational reality by means of our own possibilities into something that is close to us as *aesthetic and artistic senses* of our being (*aesthesis-and-artthesis*), thus, into something existentially significant to us, into something that will let us experience the *taste and opportunities* of life in the *most appealing way* while aesthetically transforming our being.

Further I will not dwell on every implemented project, instead I will focus on what is connected with the topic of teaching aesthetics – with its praxis in educational projects. By this I mean the transition of intention into a project, notably, its aesthetic transformation.

A creative task that I gave to my philosophy students was based not only on their philosophically supported ideas about beauty but also, at least, on their stories of how they met the beautiful, how they interpreted it by means of available theoretical versions, and, at most, on a presentation of their own, implemented or intended, *project of beauty* where they could rely on their aesthetic experience. I was mainly interested in projects of beauty from the point of their aesthesis (or aestheticization). If we do not take into account projects that are heavily inclined towards arthesis (artification), it was, for example, projects connected with the musical impact: someone opened their own musical studio, where they teach vocal and piano lessons to children and adults, or started to learn music, or began to acquaint others how to learn jazz by means of their own skills and achievements. Thus, these projects were mainly connected with the body, gender, home, food, fashion, package, photography (not as art), tourism, website development, urban environment, landscape design, environment.

One of “bodily” aestheticization projects was as follows: its author, a slender girl, told that she lost 28 kg without any additional or medical means only thanks to her desire and will to be a woman. Unfortunately, her method remained a secret, but, what is important, the aesthetic intention under the influence of this project has transformed into another reality, from ugliness into beauty.

Now I will dwell on *artification*. It was related to another educational project – a project of using the potential of the electronic glossary on the philosophy of artistry. The glossary is located on the specially created website, *glossarya.com*. On the website, students and masters of philosophical faculty were offered a creative task. They should write their own articles for the glossary on the basis of their ideas of artistry and in the form of those concepts that were the closest to them in their understanding of artistry. Students who attend a special course on *Philosophical Problems of Contemporary Artistry*, which familiarizes them with the experience of contemporary art and its philosophical interpretations, were put in the situation of real intellectual entry into philosophical praxis. They have an opportunity to publish articles online, taking into account the concept of the dictionary and corresponding instructions. It can even be asserted that it is they who are creating their own vision of artistry as the “first being”, principally for themselves, because they still form the backbone of the glossary project.

There are projects already published on the website, other projects – more than 50 projects and about 150 concepts – are in the editorial version. The presented articles are not only oriented towards new concepts of artistry but also pursue a more general goal – an attempt to create a new thesaurus, at least the minimum minimorum, of the language version of contemporary artistry. And I would link it with the “final project” theme, which has been previously mentioned. This is an attempt to declare myself in the situation of uncertainty in terms of today's artistry, an attempt to realize what – in general (verbally, conceptually, thesaurously) – is understood now by artistry in terms of the “final project” – as it is.

As for me, there is no doubt here – the projective escape from everyday life (transgression) is indicated by my existential conception, justified by it, and, of course, I can explain what is happening in our being and

why we need projects, I can work with them myself. The students' case is more complicated. However, it is understood within the terms of a particular *discourse*. The students were able not only to voice their projects, and the verbalization here is important, but also to find a philosophical connection between the aesthetic intention, pleasure (or taste), potentiation (or otherbeingness) and praxis: in the context of projective aesthetics, this philosophical and theoretical *beginning of Aesthesis (aestheticization) and Arthesis (artification)* can be found in all of their works.

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