

## Joyce'un Portrait'inde Sanatçı

The Artist In Joyce's *Portrait*

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## ÖZET

Iris Murdoch'un Ahlak Felsefesinde sanatın önemli bir yeri vardır. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Stephen Dedalus adlı karakterin sanatçı olma yolunda geçtiği süreci ele almaktadır. Gerçek bir sanatçı olmak için Murdoch'un ortaya koyduğu belli ölçütler vardır. Benlik gerçeği örten yapıyla bir insanın sanatçı olması yolunda en büyük engellerden biri olmaktadır. Bireyin gerçekleri görmesi için benliğin bağlarından kurtulması gerekmektedir. Murdoch, bütün sanatçılara büyük sanatçı payesi vermez çünkü ona göre sanatçıların birçoğu benliklerinin etkisinden kurtulamamaktadır. Bunun sonucu olarak ürettikleri sanatta benliklerinin yansımaları görülür. Bu tür sanat benliğin yansımalarıyla doludur ve insanları gerçekliğe yönlendirecek nitelikten yoksundur. Öte yandan gerçek bir sanatçı bireyleri yansımadan kurtarabilecek nitelikte sanat eserleri üretebilirler. Stephen'in gerçek bir sanatçı olabilmesi için benliğin yansımalarından kurtulması gerekmektedir. Benliğin yanı sıra aşması gereken başka engellerde bulunmaktadır. Sanatçı olma yolundaki diğer engeller dinin katı kuralları, İrlanda milliyetçiliği ve ailesinin sert tutumu olarak sıralanabilir. Murdoch felsefesinde insanı gerçekliğe götüren belli aşamalar vardır. Bu aşamaların bir kısmı Joyce'un bu romanında gözlemlenebilir. Bununla birlikte Murdoch'un ele aldığı bazı kavramlar da yine Portrait'te gözlemlenir. Murdoch, hayatın rastlantılı olduğunu düşünmektedir. Bireyin varsaydığının dışındaki gerçeklik rastlantılıdır. Portrait'te bu kavram ilk olarak Stephen'in evi dışındaki bir mekân olan okula gitmesiyle ortaya çıkar. Stephen kendi bilincinin kapsamına alamadığı ve nesneleştiremediği bu yeni yerden rahatsız olur. Daha sonra zamanla kendi bilincinin boyasıyla boyadığı bu yer, rastlantılılık özelliğini kaybeder ve bunun sonucu rahatsızlık duygusu da kaybolur. Benliğinden kurtulamamış bireyler kendilerine rahatsızlık veren durumlar karşısında hayaller dünyasında teselli ararlar. Stephen'in da kendini okuduğu romanın kahramanıyla özdeşleştiren hayaller kurar. Murdoch, hayal kurmayı insanı gerçeklerden uzaklaştıran, benlik dışındakini görmesini engelleyen bir durum olarak niteler. Murdoch felsefesi ile Joyce'un romanı arasında örtüşen bir başka nokta da dinin Portrait'te çok temel bir durum olmasıdır. Aynı şekilde Murdoch felsefesinde de din önemli bir yere sahiptir. Bu çalışma Stephen'in kişilik ve deneyimlerine odaklanarak Murdoch'un felsefesi ışığında gerçek bir sanatçı yetkinliğine sahip olup olmadığına bakacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sanat, Sanatçı, Joyce, Murdoch.

**Çalışmanın türü:** Araştırma

## ABSTRACT

The art plays a major role in Iris Murdoch's moral philosophy. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is the story of Stephen Dedalus's struggle to determine his way to become an artist. Murdoch has certain criteria for the real artist. The self is the biggest barrier for a person to become an artist because self veils the reality. The person should get rid of the selfish bonds to see the reality. Murdoch does not dignify all artists as great artists because she believes that most of the artists cannot escape from the impediments of their selves. And as a result quality of their selves is reflected in their arts. The ordinary artist produces bad art which is full of illusions and lacks the strength of guiding. However; the real artist's art can save a person from illusion. In this respect Stephen has many obstacles in addition to his 'self' that keeps him away from reality. The strict rules of religion, Irish nationalism and family are other barriers on his way to becoming an artist. In Murdoch's philosophy there are certain stages that can lead a person to seeing the reality. Some of these stages are evident in this novel. First of all, Murdoch claims that life is contingent. The reality which is different from the assumption of the self is the contingency. The school functions as a new contingent place and he cannot put it into scope of his consciousness and hence cannot make it a subject of his self. It causes a sense of weakness in front of the new. He finds consolation in daydreaming. Murdoch considers personal fantasy as the tissue of self-aggrandizing and consoling wishes and dreams which prevents one from seeing what is there outside one. The religion has a basic place in *Portrait*. Equally it has an important role in Murdoch's philosophy. These analogies can be enhanced. In the light of the similarities this study focuses on Stephen's personality and experiences to figure out his potential of becoming an artist within the scope of Murdoch's philosophy.

**Keywords:** Art, Artist, Joyce, Murdoch.

**The type of research:** Research

## Introduction

Art plays a major role in Iris Murdoch's moral philosophy. Murdoch entrusts social responsibilities to an artist who is supposed to lead individuals to reality as a mentor. The main theme of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is Stephen Dedalus's struggle to find his way to become an artist. Murdoch suggests certain criteria for qualification of the real art and artist. Murdoch does not dignify all artists as great artists because she believes the quality of art reflects the artist. The ordinary artist produces bad art which is full of illusions and lacks the strength of guiding. However; the real artist's art can save a person from illusion.

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Murdoch also claims that most of the produced art is unfortunately self consoling fantasy (Antonaccio, 2000; 137). In *Portrait* the final target of Stephen is to become an artist. This study focuses on Stephen's personality and experiences to figure out his potential of becoming an artist within the scope of Murdoch's philosophy.

The novel starts with Stephen's early childhood and probably his first awareness of his 'self'. The self is the centre of illusions and it is defective congenitally. Murdoch's approach to self is implacably.

I assume that human beings are naturally selfish and that human life has no external point...That human beings are naturally selfish seems true on the evidence, whenever and wherever we look at them, in spite of a very small number of apparent exceptions. About the quality of this selfishness modern psychology has had something to tell us. The psyche is a historically determined individual relentlessly looking after itself. In some ways it resembles a machine; in order to operate it needs sources of energy, and it is predisposed to certain patterns of activity. The area of its vaunted freedom of choice is not usually very great. One of its main pastimes is day dreaming. It is reluctant to face unpleasant realities. Its consciousness is not normally a transparent glass through which it views the world, but a cloud of more or less fantastic reverie designed to protect the psyche from pain. It constantly seeks consolation, either through imagined inflation of self or through fictions of a theological nature. Even its loving is more often than not an assertion of self. I think we can probably recognize ourselves in this rather depressing description. (Murdoch, 2001; 76-77)

As the individual becomes aware of his 'self' he begins to look everything through his conscious. Murdoch claims that an individual's consciousness is not a transparent glass. That's why what he sees is not the reality. The reality has a potential power to hurt the self. The human conscious intervenes the process of the acquisition of data. It tries to protect the 'self' from reality.

As Murdoch's claims about 'self' are scrutinized carefully, the main structure of *Portrait* can be observed between the lines. The life has a contingent aspect. The reality which is different from the assumption of the self is the contingency. It is not possible to comprehend everything and there will always be something beyond the reach of conscious (Aksoy, 1989; 26). As Stephen grows and gets to school age, the school becomes a place of contingency for him where he does not feel comfortable at the beginning. The discomfort is caused by the unknown aspect of the place. The school is a new place and he cannot put it into scope of his consciousness and he cannot make it a subject of his self. It causes a sense of weakness in front of the new. This feeling disturbs him until he gets used to the new place. He relaxes as the school becomes a subject of his conscious.

The *Portrait* is being constructed on consciousness of Stephen. The events are observed through his 'self'. He writes his address on his geography book beginning with himself and then he lists his school, city, county, country and so on (Joyce, 2010; 19). He puts himself at the centre of the universe. He is totally self-centred and Vice evaluates such a situation as individuals' captivity to ego, imagination, daydreaming and conscious. Stephen's attention turns towards his 'self'. He paints the outer world with the paint of his consciousness (Vice, 2007; 61). This is exactly what Stephen does. He veils the unpleasant realities with daydreaming. When he reads Alexandre Dumas's novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*, he begins to identify himself with the count in the novel.

We are anxiety ridden animals. Our minds are continually active, fabricating an anxious, usually self-preoccupied, often falsifying veil which partially conceals the world. Our states of consciousness differ in quality, our fantasies and reveries are not trivial and unimportant, they are profoundly connected with our energies and ability to choose and act. (Murdoch, 2001; 82)

In this respect Stephen's imagination is not just trivial thoughts to be ignored. What he does is a self defence against outer world. When realities of the world become unendurable, he finds consolation in daydreaming. The important point is the qualities of the fictional character that he identifies himself with. The count is a strong, wealthy, heroic and adventurous person who has been treated unfair and is determined to take revenge. On the other hand Stephen is a weak boy and his family constantly struggles with economic troubles. He redeems the anxieties of reality with such daydreaming. Thinking himself as the count gives him a temporary consolation against the unpleasant reality. Murdoch considers personal

fantasy as the tissue of self-aggrandizing and consoling wishes and dreams which prevents one from seeing what is there outside one (Murdoch, 1992; 57). Daydreaming seems as an innocent act but it veils the reality. Stephen consoles himself with fantasies, however; despite the consolation he becomes distant to reality. As it can be seen Murdoch constantly lay stress on reality and insists on dangers of fantasies.

Stephen's first artistic production is a poem which he writes as teenager. However; it cannot be accepted as real art according to Murdoch's art criteria. The poem he writes is unable to go beyond imitation. He writes a poem which is strongly imitative reproduction of Byron's poems. As he writes he falls into a daydream and tries to write a poem about Parnell. Charles Stewart Parnell is the nonfictional character of the *Portrait*. He is symbol on Irish nationalism which also functions as a barrier for Stephen on his way to become an artist. He dedicates his first poem to Parnell, however; when producing a piece of literature he is highly under effect of fantasies. Art is an important tool to lead human beings to reality. Murdoch believes that literature is one of the most important branches of art. Cultures basic side consists of literature. It depicts incidents about human beings and makes it easier to understand. Literature gives opportunities to readers to imagine the characters and events. That's why the reader focuses on the characters of the novels and he understands their personalities, their past and their motives. The reader acquires a vision from the novel and he can reflect this vision to his life (Antonaccio, 2000; 20). In this scope, Murdoch believes that literature can share some aspects of moral philosophy. Pinede highlights this approach and she claims that;

If great literature is good for the soul, as Murdoch believes it is, perhaps it is because it can lead us to ask more of ourselves in our daily lives, or because it can grant us more compassion toward others, seeing how goodness is so difficult. (Pinede, 2002; 90)

In this respect Stephen's journey to become a real artist is at the very early stages of the process. At this period Stephen is under strong influence of religion. He has a mother strictly devoted to Catholic Church and their governess, Dante, is even stricter than his mother. When Stephen declares his intention of marrying Eileen Vance in the future, the response of the family is wild because the girl is a protestant. His marriage issue requires apology according to his mother and he is threatened by Dante as; "O, if not, the eagles will come and pull out his eyes" (Joyce, 2010; 6). Stephen grows up in such a religion oriented family and also his school is a religious one. However; the method of conveying messages of religion to the boy by his surrounding is questionable.

The religion has a crucial importance in moral philosophy of Murdoch. Murdoch is very concerned about the decline of religion in Europe in twentieth century. Because according to her, the religion has an important place in the moral lives of human beings. She builds a bridge between religion and the moral philosophy, that's why she considers the decline of religion as a great loss (Lewis, 1993; 466). The religion Murdoch focuses on is different from the religion Stephen is exposed to. In Stephen's case the rules are imposed obligatory. The religion functions as a threat and makes pressure on the formation of the personality of Stephen. The main theme of his religious identity consists of fear. His choices and free will are ignored by his surroundings. Too much pressure causes a blow up and he gives up following the orders of the church. He finds himself in the whirl of sins and he loses his innocence.

Stephen's estrangement to religion takes some time and his return to religion is again provided by the religious fear. Father Arnall's sermon about the hell and torments in the hell give Stephen a deep shock. The sermon functions as an epiphany. Stephen is regretful because of the sins he committed. What makes him regret is not his consciousness. His fear of torments in the hell causes him to reshape his life. He is so frightened that he senses the touch of the hell fire, he feels as if his brain is boiling with the heat of the hell (Joyce, 2010; 196). The fear becomes a motivation for him to get his acts together. He pushes himself too much for a righteous life.

Stephen's new lifestyle is noticed by the director of Jesuit school and he is offered to think about becoming a priest. It is a very serious decision to make. At the first stages of the idea he feels proud to be elected for such a graceful duty. He begins to daydream himself in the form of a young priest. As he meditates on the idea, his excitement dies away. If he becomes a priest it would be a grave and ordered and passionless life that will await him (Joyce, 2010; 254). When he considers from this point of view the

idea gives a sense of suffocation to him. What Murdoch brings into forefront about religion is its effect on people how it increases the desire to be a better person. However; in Stephen's case religion's role is limiting the freedom. When making judgements about his future as a member of the religious world, he conceives the mythological figure Daedalus. Stephen's family name is Dedalus and he establishes a connection between the Daedalus and himself. Mythology is a field that is also used very often by Murdoch in her novels very often. The mythological Daedalus is shut up in a tower, and he constructs big wings with feathers and wax. He flies to freedom from the tower. Stephen identifies himself with Deadalus. His freedom is limited by religion and he believes that he should be free from the constraints of the church.

Murdoch suggests many aspects that can lead individuals to see the reality. Natural beauty is one of them and she highlights the crucial importance of remaining together with beauty. She suggests that beauty is a common concept that is shared by nature and art. It can turn the self-centred attention to other things. To support this idea she gives such an example;

I am looking out of my window in an anxious and resentful state of mind, oblivious of my surroundings, brooding perhaps on some damage done to my prestige. Then suddenly I observe a hovering kestrel. In a moment everything is altered. The brooding self with its hurt vanity has disappeared. There is nothing now but kestrel. And when I return to thinking of the other matter it seems less important. (Murdoch, 2001; 82)

Stephen's mind is busy with the offer of the director. The idea of being a priest turns upside down his inner life. His attention turns to nature at the seaside. He feels the wild air, the sunlight, he looks at the beauty of a girl, and he listens to cheerful voices of children. He climbs to a hill and watches the moon in the evening. The religion begins to lose its dominant place in Stephen's inner world. Now he is more interested in aesthetics outlying. He begins to think about aesthetic theories of Aristotle and Aquinas. Art receives his attention day by day. He speaks about art at every turn with people. He steep himself in notions of art. Although the quality of his poems is still a matter of debate he continues to write poems. He has not freed himself from daydreaming yet. However; he looks the world from an artistic vision. When he sees birds, he relates them to literary works. The birds remind him Yeats play in which swallows are depicted as the symbol of freedom. Stephen knows that he will be free by following his ambition.

By the end of *Portrait* the narrative structure of the novel changes. The rest of the novel is constructed in the form of a journal. It is clear that Stephen is determined to dedicate his life to art. However; there is no further information about the quality of his artistry. There are some obstacles that function as a barrier on Stephen's way of becoming artist. The strict rules of religion, the expectations of family and the Irish nationalism are the handicaps to be dealt with. Each of the issues requires a certain struggle. It takes a long process for Stephen to free his mind from the strict tenets of religion. Irish nationalism is another topic which remains as an important problem since his childhood. Stephen is determined to leave Ireland and leaving Ireland is somehow leaving the Irish nationalism and the pressure of the family.

### Conclusion

There are certain similarities between Joyce's and Stephen's lives. Stephen's family structure in the sense of religion, economy shows similarity with Joyce's family. And the schools he attends are identical to schools that Joyce attended. In this scope it can be suggested that the contribution of Joyce's life to the *Portrait* is evident. The similarities suggest that Stephen is on the right way to be a great artist. According to Murdoch's aforementioned criteria, Joyce's skill in artistry is beyond argument. However by the end of the novel Stephen has not become a great artist yet. But he is determined to follow his ambition. He makes a great sacrifice for the sake of becoming an artist. He leaves his country, religion and his family for his target. He stands against social and religious sanctions because in order to become a great artist one has to be completely free. In this respect it can be suggested that Stephen is on the way of becoming a real artist.

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