

**THE QUESTION
OF
JUSTIFICATION
IN THE HISTORY
OF ART**

**FROM PLATO TO
GADAMER
THROUGH HEGEL**

**Some Remarks for
Outlining the Position of
Muslim Art**

Dr. Yasin AKTAY

S.Ü.Fen-Edebiyat
Fakültesi Sosyoloji
Bölümü
Öğretim Görevlisi

INTRODUCTION

I want to make some general remarks on the question of justification of art as it was put by Gadamer, and to try to prepare a ground for treating the position of art in Islam. For, the question of justification of art would be quite fruitful in treating the position of art in Islam. That is because of the fact that, as I shall try to show, in almost most of its forms art has always been subjected to a serious problem of justification. It might be concluded that the reason have been the well-known iconoclastic attitude from the very beginning. But as I shall try, again to show, it is not just the fact that Islam was an anti-paganist religion that caused the interruption of the development of pictorial arts in Islam. There can be found almost for every sect of the artistic activities some negative discourses in the original scriptures. That is, for poetry, music, painting, architecture etc. But the negative discourses don't always eliminate the all possibilities of participating any artistic activity. For example, to know that there is no forbidding command about neither poetry nor painting and nor the architecture in the Quran, had created a relatively tolerant condition for the arising of

the so-called 'Islamic Art'. My intention in this study is to catch the point that although there is not literally a forbidding discourse on the artistic activities, the dominant discourse of Islamic message marks the artistic activities in secondary values. On the other hand, applying Gadamer's characterisation of art with the three elements as 'play', 'symbol' and 'festival', my contention will be that Islamic life is already an artistic life because of the play every Muslim is charged to take and the everyday symbolical activities that has within and together with his community that creates the conditions of a festival. Although such application of the word is unique, there are many positive connotations that an Islamic point of view could appropriate.

The History of Art as a Struggle of Justification: Gadamer

Gadamer thinks of the most significant problem of art as its justification. It is not just a problem of the modern art but it always has been an important problem also for the classical art that how it could be justified. For him "... an ancient and serious problem always arises when a new claim to truth sets itself up against the tradition that continues to express itself through poetic invention or in the language of art" (Gadamer, 1984: 1). Among many examples of how art justified itself, the history of Christianity gives us good examples in both Gadamer's thinking and in providing material for a criticism of his approaches. The need for such a criticism is related to his exaggeration of the problem of art as its justification, especially in his interpretation of Hegel's treatment of art as the thing of the past.

What is to be considered as determining factor in the great history of Western art is, of course, the rejection of the iconoclasm, in the sixth and seventh centuries. This decision has had great influence on the formation of Western art, although the establishment of the iconoclasm that was rejected by the Christianity of the sixth and seventh century was originated by the earlier Christianity of Jesus himself. That was why Protestantism in its rejection of any meditationism in the relationships of men with their God, was ascribing a negative role to the icons of the Church. On the one hand, It was a quest for modifying/correcting the images of the God caused/distorted by his concrete pictorial, in such a way that would break the true image of the God and approximate the realm of religious relationships to paganism. On the

other hand, it was relying on the claim of authenticity in its new interpretation of the texts. There arose a new claim in art, therefore, that the icons were in fact not legitimised and in any way it was representing just a deviance from the true understanding of the religious thinking.

Thanks to the Protestant movement that it brought about quite rich argumentative material and provided a good ground for thinking on the problem of understanding. It is no accident that, today, most of the authors interested with the problem of understanding, *verstehende*, and in the hermeneutics that seems to arrive at the level of "uniting all sciences of our age", are committed to Protestantism. Beginning with Schleiermacher through Weber and Heidegger up to Gadamer, most have contributed to the formation of the literature on the problem of the possibility of true understanding of the texts (including social contexts or social actions, as stated by Paul Ricoeur, 1990).

Thus the hermeneutical problem in origin is a Protestant problem posed to demand a purification of the religious scriptures. There was an objective and authentic understanding of the religion that could be assured by the hermeneutic approach to the Bible. This calls for, naturally, a paradox in the role it played in the origin of the modern art. For, as we know, the history of modernity begins with both the victory of the Protestantism at all levels of life and with the rising and proliferation of the new understandings of art in the age of Reformation. As a matter of fact, the problem of art in the history of the Western modernity becomes a matter of unjustifiability. It has been associated by either a feeling of delinquency which would, at best, be characterised by its tracks followed back to the Christian 'Original Sin' or by a negation of the religious authority. That is of course not valid for the Orthodox or Catholic tradition that would be more unproblematic in justification of art, but which had thereby been attacked in terms of its authenticity. It would be useful, however, to keep in mind the point that when Christianity of the sixth and seventh century rejected the iconoclasm which gave birth to a new kind of legitimation of art, the approach was led by the motivation that, at that time the forms of art would be quite useful in propagating the message of the Bible to the masses which were mostly illiterate people. Because the icons and pictorial arts, and later, the forms of

poetry and narrative began to be used by the Church in facilitating the transmission of the message to the masses. But perhaps it was just because the fact that "the means of communication is the message itself" (Marshall McLuhan) the motivations of which taken care during the iconoclasm at short time replaced by new system of thought followed the original motivations.

Hegel's Art: Did it really die?

When he thinks of Hegel's treating art as the "thing of the past", I think, Gadamer falls into a reductionism around the problem of justification. Not to underestimate the significance of the justification of art throughout its history, but not to miss the point that art always has not carried the righteous claim for truth, I want to make some critical remarks on Gadamer's consideration of Hegel. For Gadamer, when Hegel said that "art is the thing of past", he certainly did not mean that the last Western artistic style had made its appearance on the stage of Human history. He also didn't suspect that:

...in the twentieth century a daring liberation from the historical shackles of the nineteenth century would succeed in making all previous art appear as something belonging to the past in a different and more radical sense. When Hegel spoke of art as a thing of the past he meant that art was no longer understood as a presentation of the divine in the self-evident and unproblematical way in which it had been understood in the Greek world (Gadamer, 1984: 6).

What, apart from Christianity, was characterising the Greek world for Gadamer, was the position of the divine as was manifest in the temple and visibly represented in great sculpture, in human forms shaped by human hands. Then:

Hegel's real thesis was that while for the Greeks the god or the divine was principally and properly revealed in their own artistic forms of expression,

this became impossible with the arrival of Christianity... *The claim that art is a thing of the past implies that with the close of antiquity, art inevitably appeared to require justification.*" (italics mine, Gadamer, *ibid.*: 6).

I think, what Hegel wanted here to mean and the special explanation of Gadamer are interfused with each other. For, the justification of art in Hegel has never been the central point as Gadamer tries to show. From the above considerations, Gadamer continues to his explanation of the role of the dissolution of Christian values as the assuring factor of the integration between community, society and the Church on the one hand and the self-understanding of the creative artist on the other. Now, he says, this self-evident integration, and the universally shared understanding of the artist's role that accompanies it, no longer exists as did no longer exist in the nineteenth century.

But to what extent this explanation can be attached to Hegel's declaration of the art with the words as "the art is a thing of the past"? Of course, it was also possible for the philosopher of the *Geist* to think of the problem of justification of art in his time. There might have arose such a problem and he might have touched upon it in his various considerations. But saying that "art is the thing of the past" has never been just neutral diagnosis of the legitimation crisis in which art might have been. It was by itself creating a judgement about the artistic activity in respect of the Conceptual, which was putting the question about the legitimation of art. Art, especially with its visual or sensuous¹ kinds, was thought as pre-conceptual activity of man, which in turn precludes the realisation or evolution of the ideal. It was transforming the truth into appearance without being able to say it. It was a badly spoken language. It couldn't catch the Concept, and its mystery was a result of its lack. The death of the mystery, of the enchanting might not be understood but as the heralding of the birth of the Reason. Its death is therefore, also the birth of the language that has had more central position in Hegel's system of thought.

¹By Hegel's definition, the work of art is already "as being for apprehension by man's senses, is drawn from the sensuous sphere". cf. W. G. F. Hegel, 1975: 32-41.

...art, considered in its highest vocation is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our ideas instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place... The philosophy of art is therefore a greater need in our day than it was in days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction (Hegel, 1975: 11).

Not with all its forms but especially with such visual forms as painting and statue, art was requiring the material while with poetry and music (of which I am not sure) might prepare the ground for the birth of the *Geist*. Painting is just an object for itself and not a meaning, for its dependence on materiality. But Hegel doesn't think that poetry is a form of art in as much as it becomes mentalised (*Geist*). For so long as the aesthetic appearance is dependent on only its signs it arrives at its truth so appropriately that, then, art becomes either impossible or useless and is not needed. Because art, by definition is the material mediation between the existence and its truth. It has lost its original functions, for this function was to show the meaningless and the nihiliation of the immediate (of the pure existence, the existence without language), and in order to show this art requires the material.

These are my reading of Hegel in relation with the problem of the death of art, in parallel with the reading of two Turkish authors (Bozkurt, 1986; Bümin, 1982). Indeed, the discussion of the legitimation of art in context of the dichotomy of the conceptual-material goes back to the Greeks, namely to Plato. Although Plato's words on art and artist are somehow ambiguous, because he sometimes rejects the artistic activity for its materialist nature and sometimes confirms it—especially its less materialist forms such as poetry—for its pragmatic usefulness in education, his major attitudes towards art is principally negative (Plato, 1961: 223 ff.). He thinks the art in terms of its aspect of imitating the material world and thinks that even the material world itself is the imitation of the ideal world, then, the art itself has at maximum to involve a double distortion of the genuine world. Because, art is at best an imitation of the imitation and by its very nature it

can not refrain from being a double distortion. This line of the unjustification of art would then have nourished all the idealist tradition up to Hegel's treatment of the art as "the thing of the past." But the ambiguity of Plato's attitude also emerges from his attitude towards the artist's ethical position, which is indeed another important point in problematising the justification of art; that is, whether art or artist has to obey to any ethical constraint or not. Should it be made for the sake of itself or for the sake of anything or any value outside itself? Plato's negative attitude against art, indeed, stems from his presumption that the artists, actually, insist on working for the sake of the art without taking care of any ethical value. In the dialogue he narrates between Megillus and the Athenian he inspires us think of the artists as responsible for the corruption of the Athenian Democracy. I think it would be interesting to quote some parts of this dialogue:

Athenian: Very well. When the old laws applied, my friends, the people were not in control: on the contrary, they lived in a kind of 'voluntary slavery' to the laws.

Megillus: Which laws have you in mind?

Athenian: I'm thinking primarily of the regulations about the music of that period (music being the proper place to start a description of how life became progressively freer of controls). In those days Athenian music comprised various categories and forms. One type of song consisted of prayers to the gods, which were termed 'hymns'; and there was another quite different type, which you have called 'laments'. 'Paens' made up a third category, and there was also a fourth, called 'dithyramb' (whose theme was, I think, the birth of Dionysus). There existed another kind of song too, which they thought of as a separate class, and the name they gave it was this very word that is so often on our lips: 'nomes'... People of taste and education made it a rule to listen to the performance with silent attention right through to the end; children and their attendants and the general public could always be disciplined and controlled by a stick. Such was the rigor with which the mass of the people was prepared to be controlled in the theatre, and to refrain from passing judgement by

shouting. Later, as time went on, composers arose who started to set a fashion of breaking the rules and offending good taste ... they gave the ordinary man not only a taste for breaking the laws of music but the arrogance to set himself up as a capable judge. The audiences, once silent, began to use their tongues; they claimed to know what was good and bad in music, and instead of a 'musical meritocracy', a sort of vicious 'theatrocracy' arose. But if this democracy had been limited to gentlemen and had applied only to music, no great harm would have been done; in the event, however, music proved to be the starting-point of everyone's conviction that he was an authority on everything, and of a general disregard for the law (Plato, 1975: 153-4).

As for Gadamer one can find somewhat an exaggeration of the problem of justification of art and a very subjective interpretation of the words of Hegel on the death of art. I tried to show that any application to Hegel would not provide for as anything but the strengthening of the problem of justification. And even it would be not so exaggeration to claim that the end of art was being declared alongside many other phenomena as history in Hegel. It was not, of course, refused but it was thought as having completed its very useful and required function through the evolution of the Ideal. It would here also useful, in passing, to mention the attitudes of Jewish, Christian and Greek religions toward the artistic products in relation with their position against the *Geist* in Hegel. He orders these religions in a hierarchical line in accordance with their attitudes toward the 'visual arts' corresponding their position to the closeness to the *Geist*. In this respect, the Judaic religion, is hierarchically superior to the Greek religion² because the latter represented its gods with the visible objects by which the concept of God became anthropomorphised far from any possibility of catching the *Geist*. They were exhibiting their gods, and thereby were feeling that they had

²But it is also necessary to mention that Hegel initially has had somehow different order of this hierarchy, in his earlier writings. There he was founding the Christian religion inferior than the Greek religion, because the Christianity was achieving a mediation between the individual and the universal, between the infinite and the finitude by 'Jesus' figure. The Greeks' figures of their aesthetic religion were more permanent. Jesus was an individual, whereas the gods of the Greek, despite their anthropomorphist appearance, were achieving the unity of God and man, remaining at divine level; without reducing their divinity into humanism (Feuerbach, 1957).

common things with their gods but this was conditioned by seeing the idea of universality and conceptuality in the religious thinking of the Greeks was being damaged. It was just because of this that the Greeks couldn't arrive at the *Geist*. Because the reconciliation that religion had achieved through the sensible or the aesthetic element was failure, since the reconciliation that aesthetic had achieved between form and truth was a bad reconciliation (Bümin, 1982: 163).

Coming to Christianity, its superiority comes from the superiority of memorising over the power of imagination. For, Jesus also was an embodiment and the personification of the God, he then was dead, therefore the God became the matter of memorising and not of perceiving as the gods of the Greeks who left nothing to think or to memorising. Among themselves the God were a matter of watching. The God of Christianity manifested himself without being reduced to the level of watching. Thus, he also has shown the true relationship between himself and the men. We shall return to these remarks in relation with the position of art in the relationships of the Islamic God with his subjects.

But now, after these remarks on Hegel's treatment of art in terms of its justification, I want to turn back to Gadamer's consideration of the contemporary position of art and artist that would give us a relevant clue for completing the reasons why art in all its natural forms in the Western history could not be justified in Islamic society. For Gadamer great artists were beginning to find themselves to a greater or lesser degree displaced in an increasingly industrialised and commercialised society, so that the modern artist found the old reputation of the itinerant artist of former days confirmed by his own bohemian fate.

...In the nineteenth century, every artist lived with the knowledge that he could no longer presuppose the former unproblematic communication between himself and those among whom he lived and for whom he created. *The nineteenth-century artist does not live within a community, but creates for himself a community as is appropriate to his pluralistic situation* (Gadamer, *ibid*: 7) (italics mine).

This was the situation in the nineteenth century Western society that for Gadamer, characterises the new crisis of the legitimation of art, which was resulted from the dissolution of the integration between community, society, and the Church on the one hand, and the self-understanding of the creative artist on the other. But it was also characterising the new understanding and orientations of artistic activities. The artist was now to create a community for himself without, in any way, relying on any artistic tradition of the former. This quest for the new community together with a new artistic discourse could be thought as the heavy oppression towards the 'will to novelty.' The artist is under the oppression of discovering quite original and different ways of expression. He should not try to repeat any activity of the former, for not being a successor to any man or tradition. I called this, in short, as "the pressure of our modernity to renewal" or the "will to renewal" (Aktay, 1992) that is the direct consequence of our modernisation.

Muslim Art: Between Possibilities and Constraints

That point helps us to express our idea that even in its modern forms the so-called artistic activity can never be justified in a community imagined in Islamic terms. That is as much because of the unique conception of the individual role of each Muslim in the world, society and the Community as it is because the Islamic self-understanding of a Muslim doesn't let him to experience such a bohemian life and searching for a missed truth. The Muslim individual never tries to create a community for himself in a messianic consciousness, for such an activity might extract him from the true way of the ultimate consequence (*Āqibah*). As wo/man the Muslim is aware of the human boundaries into which he has been sent to be examined how he will work in the world,³ and he does not have any initiative in determining under which conditions he will be examined. He always has a forbidden apple throughout his life, which should not be injured. The true knowledge of the universe, of the unseenable (*gayb*) and of the heavens has already been given

³"He who created death and life, that he may try which of you is best in deed: and he is the exalted in might, oft-forgiving" Qur'an, LXVII/2. English Translation by Yusuf Ali, 1946.

to him. He has to fight, notwithstanding his naturally-given will to know the consequences of eating from the Tree. He has already been informed about this activity and he has to trust this information.

Having made these remarks on the position of art and its course through the Western history in relation with the great religions, now it would be quite useful to repeat some of the questions on the Muslim society. Because the question of art or of aesthetics is quite different in Islam on the contrary of the widespread thinking. Although it always has been known to have a rich accumulation of art, Islamic history of art, in fact has been the history of the unjustifiable. That is, of course not to say that there has not occurred any artistic entity in Islamic society but to say that art has always been under the pressure of justification among the Muslims. Above all, almost all known forms of art had to face some degree of antipathy in Islamic society. First there is the widespreadly known fact that Islam from the beginning has always kept a definite iconoclasm.

The main reason of the iconoclasm in Islam is, of course, the intention underlying the sculptures, but whatever the intention might be it is seen almost inevitable that the action determines the way of thinking. The relationship between the Islamic God and the Muslim works in such a way that no kind of anthropomorphism could be tolerated. Apart from the fact that, as a result of human disability, God can never be imagined, it is also forbidden to imagine Him in any way. It is among the well-known facts that the God of the pre-Islamic Arabia was being pictured and resembled to something in the world. He was pictured, imagined and reflected in the artistic products as painting or sculptures, in His human positions together with the angels who were usually pictured as feminine. One of the definite declarations was that the femininity or masculinity is just His creation and he is not subordinated to this classification and His angels are not feminine. The categories are the conditions into which the human imagination's boundaries are shaped. But this also was thought as examination of the human will. It would be quite meaningful to remember that the basic emphasis of the Islamic message since Adam through all history of the prophets was to correct the Islamic image of the people which was distorted by the passing of generations. And it has been said that all distortions of the image of God has

always been due to thinking God within the finitude boundaries of the human relationships. One of these, for example, has been the widespread leading motive of the logic of the appeal to mediators. Ibn Taymiyya has written much about that issue (1986) in order to demonstrate that the ceremonies and the rituals which arose among even Muslims were not but a revival of the eternal custom. According to this custom the God was being pictured as a human administrator, busy, angry and hard to get near. In order to approach him, like any human administrator we should apply to His assistants.

Then, we see the impossibility of the application of artistic products in Islamic religious sphere that had opened the religious way to art in Christianity. Apart from the impossibility of imagining God and the unperceivable, the Prophet has forbidden making of his picture in any way because of the fact that all polytheisms had resulted from such exaggerating the place of the religious leaders. In one of his words (tradition) he definitely declared that he is not but a human being and he is like the ordinary people who are just the subject of the God. Any way that would carry a possibility of distorting the intention was, thus, forbidden.⁴

There is much to say on the nature of the Islamic God in relation with the nature of human imagination in comparison with Hegel's comparative treatment of the three religion's Gods. But the limits of this paper does not allow such a detailed treatment. I hope it would be sufficient to remind some studies and arguments on the anthropological dimension of the Islamic theology.⁵

To continue with various examples from other forms of arts, for

⁴This has been considered as a rule in the juridical schools of Islam as, for example, Malik b. Anas said that the means that might lead to the unlawful, are also unlawful. That is called the principle of *Sedd-i Zera'at*. For the traditions on this issue cf. Ibn Teymiyye, 1986.

⁵The first is Hasan Hanafi's project (1979) titled "From Theology to Anthropology"; and the second which was intended to be a reply to that project: Yasin Aktay, 1993. The core of the debates was not directly with the question of art. They are rather focusing on the possibility of appealing to historicist and hermeneutic ways of thinking on the problem of understanding the religious texts and the image of the God. Against a Hegelian adaptation of the "*Concept*" or "*Geist*" to the Islamic conception of God, who manifests himself in history in various forms depending on human conditions, adopted by Hanafi, Aktay argues that no any consideration of religious definition could be treated independent of the truth claim it contains literally in the religious claim, remaining in a religious domain of thinking. Then, the human existence is not the only measure of the conception of God and so on.

example, poetry has been negativised in as much as it was the saying of the non-practised. But a more important factor was that the Quranic message was being confused with poetry and the Prophet was thought to be a good poem. While the Qur'an applied a negative discourse on the poetry or on the poem, this was to the extent these replaced the Qur'an and the Prophet. However, these words also were drawing the limits of an Islamic poetry:

And the poets, it is those straying in Evil, who follow them: Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley, *and that they say what they practise not?* Except those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of God, and defend themselves only after they are unjustly attacked. And soon will the unjust assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take (From the Quran, XXVI: 224-227).

Thus, as it seems, the negative position of the poetry in Muslim society comes from encountering of the poets of the age with the Prophet and with their characteristic behaviour as lying. Besides this Quranic saying, however, there are some other reports about the clear approval of poetical examples by the Prophet. Although most of these examples seems to have occurred as pragmatical instrumentalisations, there have been some other examples that occurred just as aesthetic enjoyments. The pragmatical one is the clear encouragement of Hassan Bin Sabit by the Prophet for writing a satiric poetry against the polygamist satirists of the Islamic message or of the Prophet and the Muslims. On the other hand, I said, there were other reports on the Prophet which inform us about his listening to poetry just for the sake of "good or beautiful words". Even in such cases, however, the words of the poets were being cautioning to be not in unislamic way.

Another form of art in the age was architecture, and there were, again, some negative discourses against the development of any artistic architecture in the earlier times of Islam. What has been understood as Islamic architecture has developed, at least, after the true application of Islamic principles. That is, the development of Islamic architecture has been realised at the 'deviance times' of the Islamic religion, although such times

also might have coincided with the heyday of its civilisation. However, as İsmet Özel very rightly has shown, the appearance of concrete products of the so-called Islamic art, especially in architecture, was being indicative of the decline and degeneration of the true Islamic values such as justice and otherworldliness. This was the subliming of the humanist values, and of the revival of sovereign 'Subject' (though not in a modern sense) in the Islamic society. As a matter of fact, it was an accident that all such products that tried to indicate the magnitude of the Islamic civilisation was indeed taking place in the declining period of the civilisation. And this situation in fact is valid for all civilisations. No any inclining civilisation need to appeal to demonstrate its magnitude. Its magnitude comes already from its very accordance with the common sense of man, which excludes any claim for polygamist subjectivity.⁶

We also know reports on the Prophet that advised the believers not to adorn the mosques and to not to build huge houses, for adorning the mosques was the indication of the 'doomsday'. No doubt, like many other attitudes taken against such artistic activities by the Prophet, they were to achieve at least one goal: that is, to preclude the believers from participating in delaying positions instead of useful activities and to fall into a conformism that altogether were conflicting with various Islamic orientations. It is, then, clear that such artistic activities as architecture and painting which required some valuable materials and time-consuming efforts were not being tolerated in Islamic society.

The constraining statements on various artistic activities have led the Muslims, however, to explore and develop certain other artistic domains such as 'miniature', 'ebru', adorning, calligraphy etc. Although all these forms of art, too, have had a weakness of proper justification according to the original sources of knowledge, namely Quran and Sunna, which is usually ignored, we see an augmentation of such kinds of art with quite successful applications. That is because there has not been a clear-cut direction towards

⁶İsmet Özel, 1984., *Üç Mesele*. It might, perhaps, be useful to remind a report on the second Caliph Ömer. He had forbidden taking unportable booty for the Mujahids and settling in the conquered places, although this was a recognised right in the Qur'an, for to settle was seen as a danger for the proper dynamism and motivations of the Mujahid society of Islam.

refraining from all artistic activities, even from painting. There has, alongside the constraining elements, been statements that have made the toleration of almost all kinds of art also possible. Furthermore, that is what has, at the same time shaped the formation of so-called Muslim art. At this point, I am not sure about what is the significance of, in spite of all its problems of justification, the reflection of Islamic way of thinking and feeling on these artistic products. This reflection, of course has been manifested in the symbolism created through those artistic activities. For example, the miniature has developed as a way of the sensitivity to the pictorial prohibition and there is reflected, symbolically some senses and world views spontaneously in the works. There is a lack of perspective in the work, for example, that is thought to reflect the dramatic dimension of the life.⁷ Moreover, the continuity of time and space are all provided in the same canvas that is inspiring of various Islamic messages. Notwithstanding, all these meanings might have been attached to such works, rather than being the intended meaning in their production. There are some other activities on the other hand that carry their world views more literally. The shadowplays as Hacivat and Karagöz or Kavuklu and Piflekâr, for example, present the play as a scene of lesson. The art play there, is accomplished to suggest a change in your life, to give a warning i.e., to make references to other world than the art work itself.

Everyday Life as Art

So far we tried to show the problematic position of art or the works of art in Islamic society in terms of justification. But the requirement for clarifying what art is, still remains to be met. For the concept itself is not so unproblematic. And as it appeared during the study there is no ready answer to the question of art neither in Islamic texts nor in the Muslim society. Applying Gadamer's identification of art with its three dimensions as play, symbol and festival together with the meaning he attached them, for example, would open some other ways for thinking the issue. Because these concepts enlarge the domain of art so far as to include various Islamic ceremonies,

⁷For detailed interpretation of these works cf. Beşir Ayvazoğlu, 1993; M. Ecmel, 1991.

rituals and life styles, etc. Almost all worships of the Muslims have similar characteristics with that of a play, of symbolic action and of a festival. The prayer and the rituals during the prayer symbolises, for example, a participation of the individual to the universal harmony assured by the subordination to a single God. In every prayer a Muslim takes his part in the play of representing the construction of the world and the relationship with the God. This play takes place within a community that gathered together to play the same role in the collective prayer that is always recommended against the individual prayer. If not, the compulsory prayer of Friday already gathers all Muslims in a festival atmosphere one time a week. With the annual taxation of the possession, the Muslim, by paying his *Zekah*, believes that he purifies his property. For the etymological meaning of the term *zekah* is to purify, and the paying again takes place in a play. Then, the Hajj ceremony is the peak of experiencing the symbol, play and festival altogether. There are played various plays as throwing the three satans,⁸ the walking between the two mounts *Safa* and *marva*; the turning around the *Ka'ba*, with its very simple and plain architecture symbolises the centre of the world, together with all Muslims from every side of the world (*tawaf*). In all these festivals highly crowded people from throughout the world gather together to exercise the play in which many Muslim values are symbolised such as the Unity of God in his creation and ruling, equality, the rejection of tyranny etc.

Mircea Eliade had shown the very relationship between the sacred and the construction of the world in any society in various ceremonies (Eliade, 1991). That was a measure taken against the chaotic situation. Just as not any society can live within a chaos they require some, so to say, 'dechaotisative' ceremonies which construct the world for themselves, that is the sacred.⁹ In the Islamic ceremonies, too, the world is reconstructed over

⁸As they are interpreted by Ali Shari'ati (1979) to be the holders of the force, golden and trick corresponding to the military, economical and political-ideological dimensions of the social formations, which are characterised by three or somewhere four historical figures in the Qur'an: Pharaoh, Karun, Belam. For detailed information of this trinity and also of the rich symbolism played in the Hajj.

⁹Alia Izzetbegović (1992: 136-175), too, has shown that the first theatrical plays have been inspired by the religious rituals in the monasteries. He also thinks of the artistic productions in the late antiquity that had appeared through the Church in religious atmosphere, as a result of the productive potential of the religion. No doubt in his approach the art is

time and the chaos is completely eliminated from the life-world. Having considered the very significant point that the play does never been exercised without believing in it, about the Muslim gathering together in a festival as Hajj, Zekah, Ramadan Fastination, Community Prayer or Friday Prayer etc., it is important to note that, perhaps as differently from other artistic activities, all this play take place with a complete belief in the objective correspondence to the truth claim uttered literally or symbolically in the plays. Then, we come to the point that, in such an application of the word, the everyday life of Muslim is completely an artistic one. The Muslims are those who choose to gather together for a symbolic play in the worldly festival. The rules of the play have been already determined out of themselves, and by participating in the festival they are subordinated to accord with the rules of the play everyone gathered with himself has to play.

CONCLUSION

The application of the conception of art by Gadamer to an Islamic life-world might give fruitful material for thinking on the debates on Islamic modernism and traditionalism. In its Gadamerian sense, of course, Islamic life can be conceived as a manifestation of an art. Then it would be more meaningful to think his assertion that wherever art has broken off from life, there would be an awful weight of the constructive role the art work demands from its receiver. The penetration of modernism into Islamic life, together with its appearance as relativism and the approval of the historicist influence, then, could be said to have resulted from the withdrawal of the Islamic praxis or habitus in Bourdieuean sense (Bourdieu, 1990; Aktay, 1997).

In this article, I tried to show the secondary position of the artistic activities as distinct from other activities. The secondary position of each form of art reflects some different sensitivities. In sculpture as well as in painting, for example, there is found a way for the will-to-create, which goes hand in hand with the will-to-be-sovereign or with the widespread saying the will-to-power. This is the essential thinking underlying polytheism. In poetry, however, there is a sensitivity arising for an authenticity in thinking and talking. A man should not say what he is not to do. In architecture, the

presupposed to be religiously needless to be justified i.e., its claim for truth is self-evident and that is in parallel with the ideals of Abrahamic religion.

underlying idea or sensitivity about the negative attitude is the refrainment of a mujahid society from being settled on the one hand, and the fact that it was marked as squandering. Then, if there has appeared an entity that is called "Islamic art" this is not to conclude that it has had its sufficient fundamentals in the Islamic Scriptures. Instead it has usually developed in expense of ignoring some emphasis of the Fundamentals but also reflecting the ideology in the art works. That is why I have chosen to use the word phrase "Muslim Art" instead of "Islamic Art". Notwithstanding, by adopting the conception of art in three concepts as play, symbol and festival I hoped to show the artistic character of the Islamic life. And in as much as the artistic activities are distinguished from the total life we, then, witness the corresponding developments of secularisation process. That is because of the very diagnosis of Gadamer, whom I would agree in this context, that wherever art has broken off from life, there would be an awful weight of the constructive role the art work demand from its receiver.

REFERENCES

- Ajmal, M., 1966, Painting in Islam, in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, by M. M. Şerif (ed. two volumes), volume: 2, Wiesbaden.
- Aktay, Yasin, 1992, Modernlik Durumumuza Dair, *Tezkire*, Number: 3.
- Aktay, Yasin, 1993, Anlama Vahy ve Tarih: Vahyi Yorumsama Deneyimlerinin Eleştirel bir İncelemesi, *Tezkire*, Güz, Number: 5.
- Aktay, Yasin, 1997, *Body, Text, Identity: The Islamist Discourse of Authenticity in Modern Turkey*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ankara: METU
- Ali, A. Yusuf, 1946, *The Holy Quran: Text, Translation, Commentary*, two volumes, New York, For Hafner Publishing Company.
- Ayvazoğlu, Beşir, 1993, *İslâm Estetiği*, İstanbul, Ağaç Yayınları.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, 1990, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. from the French (1980) by R. Nice, California: Stanford University Press.
- Bozkurt, Nejat, 1986, *Seçilmiş Parçalar*; İstanbul, Remzi Kitabevi.
- Bümin, Tülin, 1982, Hegel'de "Sanatın Ölümü" Üzerine bir Deneme, *Felsefe Yazıları*, 4 th book, Yazko,
- Eliade, Mircea, 1991, *Kutsal ve Dindışı*, Trans. by M. Ali Kılıçbay, Ankara.

- Feuerbach, Ludwig, 1957, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. by, George Eliot: New York.
- Gadamer, H. G., 1984, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, Cambridge University Press.
- Hanafi, Hasan, 1978. "Teoloji mi Antropoloji mi?", trans. by M. Sait Yazıcıoğlu [from *Renaissance du Monde Arabe*, A. Abdel Malek and Hasan Hanefi (eds), Duculot, 1972, Belgium] in *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, Vol. 23, pp. 505-531.
- Hegel, W. G. F., 1975, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Two volumes, translated into English by T. M. Knox, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Izzetbegovich, Alia, 1992, *Islam Between the East and the West*, İstanbul: Nehir.
- İbn Teymiyye, 1986, *İbn Teymiyye Külliyyatı*, 7 volumes, trans. by a commission, İstanbul: Tevhid.
- Özel, İsmet, 1978, *Üç Mesele: Teknik, Medeniyet, Yabancılaşma*, İstanbul. Düşünce.
- Plato, 1961, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. by e. Hamilton and H. Cairns, Princeton: University Press.
- Plato, 1975, *The Laws*, trans. by T. J. Saunders, London: Penguin Books.
- Ricour, Paul, 1990, Anlamli Eylemi bir Metin Gibi Görmek, in *Toplum Bilimlerinde Yorumcu Yaklaşım*, by Paul Rabinow & William Sullivan (eds.) Turkish trans. by Taha Parla, İstanbul: Simavi Vakfi Yayınları, (first published in *Social Research*, Fall, 1971, No 3).
- Shari'ati, Ali, 1979, *Hacc*, Trans. by Fatih Selim, İstanbul: Düşünce.