

Abstract

In his meditations on the arts of Ancient Greece Friedrich Nietzsche touches upon the essence of what makes art what it is. Since I feel that speaking about the essence of things became a possibility again — the post-modern relativism is less fashionable now, while at the same time it has opened new hitherto unthinkable possibilities of thought and expression — I take as my starting point some key moments of Nietzsche's thinking on art, in order to get — in the context of modern and contemporary art — an understanding of what makes art still so fundamental to our lives today.

Beauty here re-emerges as the main motive again in art. In Nietzsche's conception of art beauty is not just an aesthetic category but plays a much more significant role — it is the main and the only criterion of truth.

Even though beauty was in the last several decades denied, rejected and forbidden, it re-appears now as a constitutive value in contemporary art — although quietly and not as an aim in itself (as is indeed innate to beauty).

Rediscovering beauty is crucial also (and perhaps primarily) in the context of the possible (political) manipulation that art can be easily subjected to — which Plato warned against right at the birth of the mimetic arts, for it can result in spiritual, political and ethical corruption that today as much as ever poisons the cultural and public life of our society — and where beauty stands as the only real measure distinguishing truth from falsity.