

Chapter 13

The Theory of the Aesthetic Situation of Maria Gołaszewska (1926–2015) and Feminist Interventions in Philosophy



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Abstract Maria Gołaszewska (1926–2015) was a Polish philosopher associated throughout her life with Poland’s oldest academic institution, the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. She was a student of the phenomenologist Roman Ingarden, himself a student of Edmund Husserl. During the post-war and communist years in Poland, Gołaszewska conducted research focusing on issues related to art and aesthetics. She created her own conception of empirically and anthropologically oriented aesthetics, which I argue is a prime example of a theory that accounts for the perspective of gender, and which should be acknowledged as having anticipated the main postulates of contemporary feminist philosophy. In the article I present Gołaszewska’s philosophy as a cognitively valuable response to the search of feminist aesthetics for a suitable description of women’s experiences related to art and aesthetic perception. In accordance with this aim, I discuss Gołaszewska’s theory of the aesthetic situation, a framework within which she proposed solutions similar to feminist standpoint theories developed primarily on the basis of the feminist philosophy and feminist epistemology (Elizabeth Anderson, Donna Haraway, Sandra Harding, Elizabeth Potter). In recent years they have also found creative applications in feminist aesthetics (Anne Eaton).

13.1 An Undeclared Feminist

In the history of Polish culture, very few women have dealt with philosophy, and even fewer have left behind them a lasting and significant contribution to not only domestic but also world philosophical thought. Currently, one important albeit underestimated

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figure is that of Maria Gołaszewska,¹ as represented by her academic achievements. Throughout her life, this philosopher was associated with Poland's oldest educational institution, the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. Here she garnered knowledge and successive academic titles under the supervision of Roman Ingarden, an outstanding student of Edmund Husserl (Czakoń et al., 2018b, 117–135; The Roman Ingarden Digital Archive, undated). Gołaszewska was an extraordinary figure, important not only for Polish academia, but also for Polish and world philosophy. Although she never declared herself a feminist, I believe that both her philosophical thought and lifelong attitude towards academic institutions can be termed feminist.

The goal of the present article is to present the figure of Gołaszewska as the author of original academic works in the field of philosophy and aesthetics. Selected issues of Gołaszewska's aesthetics—in particular, her theory of the axiological and aesthetic situation—will be discussed in the context of standpoint theories developed on the basis of feminist philosophy. Indeed, I believe that Gołaszewska's thought possesses a feminist character. At the same time, it constitutes an innovative and cognitively valuable proposal for a theoretical description of the aesthetic experience, taking gender perspective into account. The formulation of an aesthetic theory accounting for this perspective has been the goal of feminist researchers since the late 1980s.² However, presentations of aesthetic issues within the framework of feminist philosophy have not been cognitively satisfactory, as they do not provide a theoretical description of specifically feminine aesthetic experiences. In particular, they lack a holistic view of these experiences—one which would account for an interdisciplinary approach and combine philosophical theory with the practice of everyday life. Gołaszewska's theory of the aesthetic situation appears to fully account for these feminist postulates.

¹ Maria Gołaszewska studied philosophy at the Faculty of Humanities of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow in the years 1945–50. She defended her master's thesis, written under the direction of Roman Ingarden and entitled “Teoria spostrzeżenia według Maine de Birana [The theory of perception according to Maine de Biran],” in 1950, and her doctoral dissertation, entitled “Twórczość a osobowość twórcy. Analiza procesu twórczego [Creativity and the personality of the creator: Analysis of the creative process],” also written under the supervision of Ingarden, in 1956 at the Catholic University of Lublin. In 1957 she began work as a research assistant in the Department of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University, under Ingarden's direction. She obtained her habilitation in 1964 on the basis of her thesis on “Filozoficznych podstaw krytyki literackiej [The philosophical foundations of literary criticism].” In 1974 she was awarded the title of associate professor and, a decade later, in 1984, of full professor. In the years 1981–96, she directed the Department of Aesthetics that she herself had organized at the Institute of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University. Gołaszewska was a member of many Polish and international academic societies. Her publishing credits include approximately three hundred academic publications in the field of philosophy. She edited over a dozen volumes of works in the field of aesthetics, including *Estetyka w świecie* [Global Aesthetics] (five volumes, published between 1985 and 1996), an anthology of the most important articles on contemporary aesthetics, translated into Polish. See Chudoba and Smywińska-Pohl (2017) and Czakoń et al. (2018a).

² Researchers dealing with the problem of formulating the aesthetic theory from the feminist perspective include Carolyn Korsmeyer, Heide Göttner-Abendroth, Hilde Hein, Anne Eaton, Mary Devereaux, Renée Cox, Estella Lauter, and Peg Brand Weiser. See Michna (2019).

13.2 Gołaszewska's Philosophical Inspirations

In the postwar communist years in Poland, which were un conducive to learning, Gołaszewska conducted research focused on issues related to art and aesthetics, referring to the findings of Ingarden's phenomenology as well as to those of structuralism and existentialism. However, her research transcended formal-theoretical description of art and the experience thereof. The need to overcome the phenomenological perspective and to supplement it with practical issues related to the creation and experience of art as part of everyday life resulted from Gołaszewska's personal conviction concerning the limitations of a purely speculative approach to artistic creativity, as well as, more broadly, to life itself:

It is necessary to have some kind of formula of life, something to serve as the guiding thread of our intentions, actions, and goals. I have been searching for this formula of life almost from the very beginning of the awakening of a philosophical sense within me. At first it comprised religious principles drawn from the Ten Commandments. When I took the path of professional philosophy, I looked for them in the philosophy of Ingarden; this gave me a great deal, even if I wasn't able to find there what would suffice for me, what I could consider as final, unquestionable, and, above all, as my own. (Gołaszewska, 1998, 15)

For Gołaszewska, the search for her own philosophical path entailed, first and foremost, creative development of the aesthetic thought of Ingarden, her mentor and teacher. One issue that particularly interested Gołaszewska was the situation of the experience of a work of art and its philosophical implications. Ingarden made use of the concept of the aesthetic situation in a 1960 lecture in which he treated it as the point of departure for aesthetics as a whole (Ingarden, 1981b, 173–180). He defined the aesthetic situation as the “encounter” between the creator and the object he or she produces or the “encounter” of a recipient with a work of art. The concept of the aesthetic situation was too rigid for Ingarden; therefore he used the concept of an “encounter” (Ingarden, 1970, 23–25), which, for him, was not an individual event but a process that developed over time in various phases. Importantly, Ingarden considered the concept of the aesthetic situation on the basis of aesthetic experiences, describing them through indicating the process of concretization, creation of the aesthetic object, and interpretation of the work. Gołaszewska, while taking the concept of the aesthetic situation from Ingarden, did not employ it in the same manner. Taking Ingarden's thoughts as a starting point, she presented her own detailed description of the schema of the aesthetic situation, around which all her subsequent considerations related to the issues of the creation, existence, and reception of art were focused. In this sense, it can be said that Ingarden merely employed the concept of the aesthetic situation, whereas Gołaszewska built her entire theory around it.

One important inspiration for Gołaszewska to take up the issue of the aesthetic situation was Jean Paul Sartre's concept of the “human situation in the world” (Gołaszewska, 1973, 7). In accordance with the spirit of existentialism, she emphasized that a human being is not “an entity in him- or herself” (*en soi*), but is shaped by events and develops his or her existence through actions and situations encountered in the world. These shape and define the human being, even though he himself/she

herself is their creator. In this context, Gołaszewska described the mutual interdependencies between the artist, the creative process, the work of art, the process of aesthetic cognition, and aesthetic values. Given these interdependencies, one important concept in laying the foundations of Gołaszewska's theory of the aesthetic situation was structuring, understood as the ability to detect meanings and assign them to the structure of the universe of values on the basis of the structures of actual reality—both physical and specifically human—as experienced. From this perspective, structuring is one way to exist, one of the ways of being in the world: “We structure ourselves as structuring” (Gołaszewska, 1997, 43). This process is closely related to the creation of a uniquely human space, which is the subject of all aesthetic research. Aesthetics, Gołaszewska insisted, must refer to human reality, to humanity in general as well as to the individual, because it is precisely the anthroposphere, unrecognized by means of discursive, empirical, and scientific inquiry, which is the appropriate area for the definition of the general theoretical assumptions of aesthetics (Gołaszewska, 1997, 224).

Philosophical inquiry and the need to develop her own position led Gołaszewska to create an original axiological and anthropological-oriented theory of aesthetics, one taking empirical methods into account (Serafin, 2014a, 262–281). The empirical orientation of Gołaszewska's aesthetics means, first of all, reference to facts, through which the philosopher understands all creations, experiences, and creative processes (academic, technical, artistic, etc.) and—most importantly—the values created by humanity:

Reference to facts, in all their diversity and multiplicity, enriches theoretical reflection and validates and verifies the theoretical approaches introduced. The empirical orientation we apply here to the problem of values is therefore more closely related to phenomenological analysis of the data connected with experience than to research specific to the particular sciences. (Gołaszewska, 1990, 11)

Therefore, in undertaking axiological and ultimately aesthetic reflection, the point of departure for Gołaszewska's research comprised individual and specific events, processes, situations, and items related to the category of values.

The main points of the aesthetic research undertaken by Gołaszewska concerned the concept of artistic creativity (Gołaszewska, 1958), types of creativity (Gołaszewska, 1973), values associated with the aesthetic situation, the typology of the recipient of a work of art, and the differences between the artist and the recipient (Gołaszewska, 1967a). All of these issues constituted components of the theory of the aesthetic situation created and developed by Gołaszewska (1970b). And although it cannot be said that Gołaszewska built a systemic and multi-faceted philosophy of humanity, the synthetic aesthetic solutions she proposed undoubtedly constitute an original and coherent whole. Within the framework of this whole, it is possible to distinguish the successive stages of the development of her own philosophy: research based on structuralism, existentialism, and phenomenology, followed by axiological and empirical orientation, in the creation of the theory of the aesthetic situation.

13.3 Gołaszewska's Theory of the Aesthetic Situation

The concept of the aesthetic situation was first proposed by Gołaszewska in 1967 in the article "I due poli del'estetica" [The two poles of aesthetics] (Gołaszewska, 1967b, IX–XII). She then developed this concept in two papers, *Świadomość piękna. Problematyka genezy, funkcji, struktury i wartości w estetyce* [Awareness of beauty: Issues of genesis, function, structure and values in aesthetics] (1970b) and *Zarys estetyki. Problematyka, metody, teorie* [Outline of aesthetics: Problems, methods, theories] (1973); however, she wrote about it in many other publications as well (Gołaszewska, 1964, 41–60; 1983, 133–151; 1984a; 1984b; 1986a, 131–142; 1995). Gołaszewska opened her aesthetic considerations by applying a broader research perspective, that is, describing the existential and metaphysical situation of humanity in relation to the real world, the world of values, and the creative process (Ostrowicki, 1998, 71). Therefore, Gołaszewska's approach to the theory of the aesthetic situation necessitates reference to the complex context of philosophical reflection on the human condition and the surrounding reality.

The starting point for formulation of the theory of the aesthetic situation was the overarching concept of the axiological situation. Referring again to Ingarden's thought, in particular to his concept of relatively isolated systems (Ingarden, 1981a, 419–422; Węgrzecki, 2001, 262–263), Gołaszewska created a theory involving the dynamic structure of the axiological situation, of which one of the fundamental elements is the human being, itself a relatively isolated system composed of subsystems, among them the so-called anthroposphere. The aim of human activities in the anthroposphere is the production of objects or states of things leading, in accordance with the assumed ideals, to the implementation of certain values desired by the human being in question. The axiological situation thus signifies the continuous action of human beings in the world, consisting of the realization or extinction of various values. Constantly making choices between values entangles a human being in various kinds of oppositions, tensions, and contradictions, whereas the moment of realizing their existence signals the beginning of the human being's conscious existence within the axiological situation, thus leading to the necessity to choose certain values at the expense of others. The human being can overcome the contradictions that arise at this point by acting, accepting challenges, and continually making choices, resulting in certain specific states of things as well as objects which arise in connection with the previously selected values (Gołaszewska, 1985, 25–42; 1986b, 124–129).

The axiological situation, according to Gołaszewska, is the basic *modus operandi* of human beings in the world. Always, she seems to suggest, we find ourselves in the axiological situation; we are condemned to it. Therefore, no appropriate approach to human existence appears possible outside the axiological situation, in which—as a dynamic structure—it is possible to effectively distinguish such moments as the experience of opposition in contacts with the world; ideals and intentions concerning the creation of states of things; and intention and action and its result (Gołaszewska, 1990, 45–58).

One particular kind of axiological situation is the aesthetic situation, whose components are subsystems: (1) the artist and his or her aspects: personality traits in their entirety (basic personality), the endowments of the individual involved in the creative process (creative personality), the subject of the work—traces of the person of the artist in the work; (2) the creative process, including artistic intention, the design of the work as realized in the initial vision thereof, and the realization of the artifact; (3) an artistic work with an axiological endowment, realized aesthetic and artistic values, the work's social function; (4) a recipient of art with an aesthetic personality and sensitivity to artistic and aesthetic values, nourished by various types of aesthetic experiences; (5) the primary factor of the aesthetic situation, i.e., aesthetic value, beauty discovered and actualized, and artistic value actualized (Gołaszewska, 1970b, 55; 2001, 12–13).

Aesthetic values, according to Gołaszewska, constitute the fundamental determinant of every aesthetic situation. It is through their relationship to these values that the other elements are considered one by one, i.e., the recipient, the creator, and the work of art: “[T]he aesthetic situation is complete when all of the essential ingredients are present (the artist, the work, value, and, finally, the recipient)” (Gołaszewska, 1973, 332). Gołaszewska indicated the existence of relationships and dependencies between particular components resulting from their individual natures, which must be taken into account in any analysis of the aesthetic situation:

For an empirically oriented aesthetics, the starting point, and at the same time the main field of research, is the situation in which an individual comes into contact with a work of art, bearing in mind that this is an artist's creation intended to be viewed for the sake of the embodied aesthetic values contained therein (along with the situation in which an individual comes into contact with an object of nature, discerns aesthetic values therein and creates, on the basis of the existing thing, an aesthetic object). Here we have a close reciprocal relationship, “interpenetration” of the properties of the object and subject and aesthetic value: for the sake of its value, the individual interacts with the work; for the sake of its value, the artist creates it; for the sake of its value, the work finds its particular place in the ensemble of human creations. (Gołaszewska, 1973, 332)

A work of art possesses an aesthetic value that can be made accessible to the viewer. Therefore Gołaszewska repeatedly emphasized that

... it is precisely aesthetic value that binds the three basic elements together [creator, work of art, recipient – author's note] into a single whole, causing their affiliation to the extent that they cannot be fully understood or defined in isolation, either from other elements of the aesthetic situation or from the question of values. (Gołaszewska, 1976, 7)

In Gołaszewska's theory of the aesthetic situation, it is essential to perceive and study all of its elements and contexts as a heterogeneous, coherent whole, as independent study of individual elements of the structure of the aesthetic situation leads to an incomplete description of these elements as well as the phenomena to which they are subject. Equally important, the postulate of a comprehensive approach to the aesthetic situation refers to Gołaszewska's proposal to account for theoretical and empirical planes in aesthetic research (Serafin, 2013, 75–90). Consequently, Gołaszewska's theory can be interpreted as a model area for contemporary feminist research in aesthetics. Thus, on the basis of feminist theories, a theoretical approach to

the phenomena related to the creation and reception of art is postulated, treating them as a multi-faceted, heterogeneous process whose senses and meanings are determined by not only the work of art, the artist, and the recipient, but also specific circumstances and values related successively to these entities. In the feminist approach, these specific circumstances and values constitute a space in which gender biases are revealed and, importantly, can be overcome.

On the empirical level, the aesthetic situation is an example of the application of aesthetic theory, and thus of precise theoretical decisions in reference to specific artistic achievements. Hence the conclusion that the axiologically and empirically oriented aesthetics proposed by Gołaszewska is a space in which philosophical theories are linked with the practice of everyday life. The essential relationship between these two areas of human activity—theory and everyday life—is indicated by feminist researchers representing all currents. Moreover, the methodological postulate of the practice of axiologically and empirically oriented aesthetics entails the need to sensitize and open the aesthetic theory to other fields of philosophy and science. Aesthetics in Gołaszewska's approach is based on, and makes use of, the results of research from other academic disciplines—for example, sociology and psychology, as well as theory and history of art and theory of culture. This aesthetics is thus interdisciplinary and characterized by openness and the capacity for self-transformation, in view of the development and theoretical achievements of other complementary disciplines.

13.4 Feminist Standpoint Theories

From the research perspective adopted in the present article, Gołaszewska's aesthetic considerations preceded the postulates raised on the grounds of aesthetics by feminist researchers. Hence the assertion that the theory of the aesthetic situation can be interpreted in feminist terms, as a proposal to implement feminist postulates in terms of sensitizing philosophy to social, cultural, racial, ethnic, and gender-related factors. In order to show how a feminist interpretation of Gołaszewska's theory of the aesthetic situation is possible, I will refer to feminist standpoint theories, which have been developed since the 1970s on the basis of the epistemology by researchers such as Elizabeth Anderson, Donna Haraway, Sandra Harding, and Elizabeth Potter, and also, in recent years, in the field of aesthetics, in the form of standpoint aesthetics (Eaton, 2009, 272–275).

Feminist standpoint theories place relations between political and social power and knowledge center-stage. Within this framework, it is acknowledged that the social position of a subject shapes and limits his or her knowledge through affecting his or her experiences and worldview. Hence the subject's knowledge and all cognitive activity (including contact with art!) are of a *situated* character, that is, conditioned on many levels and limited, but also privileged, as a result of the sociocultural location of the subject. Importantly, feminist standpoint theories are both descriptive and normative, describing and analyzing the causal effects of power structures on knowledge

while advocating a specific route for enquiry, a route that begins from standpoints emerging from shared political struggle within marginalized lives (Bowell, undated). Hence, the central concepts of these theories are situated knowledge and the situated subject.

According to Elizabeth Anderson, “[t]he central concept of feminist epistemology is that of a situated knower, and hence of situated knowledge: knowledge that reflects the particular perspectives of the subject” (Anderson, 2000). The feminist thesis of the situatedness of knowledge means that credible and certain knowledge is achieved by research communities incorporating members of socially marginalized groups, especially women. These groups, excluded from the dominant discourses of knowledge and power due to their situatedness, possess epistemic privilege and a more rigorous, critical awareness of research problems. In this sense, as Helen E. Longino writes, situated knowledge is social knowledge, as all the factors of the cognitive process from which it results are of a social nature (Longino, 1990, 215–232).

On the basis of feminist standpoint theories, the thesis of the situatedness of knowledge has gone through numerous elaborations (Assiter, 1996; Benhabib, 1992; Braidotti, 2006, 197–208; Harding, 1991; Smith, 1990), but the first and most representative overview was presented by Haraway (1988, 575–599), who noted that traditional science and philosophy—created and developed mainly by privileged (white and heterosexual) men—was based on the doctrine of disembodied scientific objectivity. The (disembodied) scientific and philosophical discourses that emerged in this manner became, as Haraway argues, “rhetoric, a series of efforts to persuade relevant social actors that one’s manufactured knowledge is a route to a desired form of very objective power” (Haraway, 1988, 577). The subject of the process of cognition thus understood was disembodied: deprived of a bodily dimension, abstracted from material properties, isolated from individual experiences and values, undefined and non-situated. Knowledge, as a result of the cognitive activity of such an entity, became “distorted and extremely irrational” (Haraway, 1991, 193). In other words, the disembodiment of traditional science and philosophy stood for the ideal of theoretical mastery of the world exercised by an entity that was anonymous, ahistorical, distanced and torn away from circumstances and values, and that made use of universal tools whose application was intended to guarantee results with a high degree of objectivity. This ideal meant not only the depreciation of corporeality as a useful and cognitively valuable research perspective, but also the abstraction of the impression-based material thus derived from its sources. Impression-based data perceived by the senses—that is, whose *de facto* source was human corporeality—were permanently estranged from this corporeality.

The counterproposal to traditional disembodied objectivity is “new,” feminist objectivity, characterized by situated knowledge, thus taking into account the contexts and conditions in which both the subject and the object of cognition are found. The concept of situated knowledge is based on the assertion that every human being is born with the capacity for examining the world only from a specific point of view and with the help of specific research methods and tools (Anderson, 2000). Situated knowledge, then, is embodied knowledge. To describe it, Haraway uses the metaphor of vision. This vision differs from the traditional ideal of “in-depth” vision, that is, a

vision of things constituting unmediated, unbiased, value-free “attainment” of their essence. Haraway asserts that such an ideal of knowledge is only a “god trick” which makes us delude ourselves into believing that this essence of things exists and, moreover, is cognitively available to us.

This situational, embodied vision of things, as described by Haraway, does not equate to exclusive knowledge of their essence and of the universal laws to which they (allegedly) are subject. On the contrary, an individual perspective or view of the world is never complete; the result of the subject’s interaction with the object is not only knowledge, but a transformation of the cognizing subject and the object under study. Thus understood, the embodiment of knowledge—taking into account the situatedness of the subject and object and the relationship between them, the individual experiences, values, and socio-cultural involvement of the subject, and the subjective selection of research methods and of the subject of the research—is a condition for its “new” objectivity. Therefore Haraway has repeatedly emphasized that the “objectivity [sought in feminist philosophy—author’s note] is not about disengagement but about mutual and usually unequal structuring, about taking risks in a world where ‘we’ are permanently mortal, that is, not in ‘final’ control” (Haraway, 1988, 595–596).

The concept of the situated subject, which is related to the theory of the situatedness of knowledge, is based on the assertion that social position shapes and limits the subject’s knowledge because it affects his or her experiences and worldview (Potter, 2006, 120–122). In terms of the situatedness of the subject within the framework of feminist philosophy, an essential role is played by the postulate of valuation of entities that are oppressed within the dominant system of social relations. This valuation, as Anderson writes, means giving them a privileged status in the process of learning about reality and producing knowledge: “Where the standpoint of the privileged tends to represent existing social inequalities as natural and necessary, the standpoint of the disadvantaged correctly represents them as socially contingent, and shows how they could be overcome” (Anderson, 2000). This means that the point of view of the dominated groups possesses not only the (heretofore unexploited) potential to develop and transform existing knowledge about reality, but simultaneously a practical dimension, meaning the capacity to transform the existing social and discursive order.

In recent years, the feminist standpoint theory has also found application in the field of aesthetics, in the form of feminist standpoint aesthetics. Anne Eaton, who suggested this term, claims that feminist standpoint aesthetics “takes as its point of departure the idea that taste—broadly speaking, our capacity to produce, appreciate, and judge aesthetic value—is deeply social” (Eaton, 2009, 272). The philosopher indicates three main theses on which feminist standpoint aesthetics is based: “(1) Social location systematically shapes how art—broadly construed—is made, and how both art and nature are understood, appreciated, and evaluated” (Eaton, 2009, 272). Importantly, “social location” should be understood as a person’s ascribed social identities—for example, gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., and the social roles and relationships considered appropriate to them (Anderson, 2000). The second thesis on which the feminist standpoint aesthetics is based is that “[t]aste

is normative: judgments of taste admit of degrees of success and competence, and correct judgments of taste have legitimate claims on others” (Eaton, 2009, 272). The third thesis is that “[s]tandpoints—that is, social positions that yield uniquely perceptive awareness of particular features of the world—can be aesthetically privileged in certain crucial respects” (Eaton, 2009, 272).

Feminist researchers concerned with the issues of aesthetics and philosophy of art generally agree that gender—the different roles, norms, and meanings assigned to people based on real or imagined anatomical characteristics of the different sexes—is a constitutive element of aesthetic creation, experience and judgment (Korsmeyer, 2004). Importantly, however, the presence of gender bias in aesthetic theory need not be unequivocally negative. Seemingly, this conclusion lies at the core of the feminist standpoint aesthetics proposed by Eaton. Generative bias, as Eaton refers to it, “is a perspective that is partial—that is, both *slanted* and *incomplete*—yet marked by an awareness of the effects, both positive and negative, of social location” (Eaton, 2009, 273). This means that taking into account the meaning and cognitive consequences of gender bias in aesthetic theory “can bring neglected perspectives into view, thereby allowing us to see beauty, ugliness, and other aesthetic values where they had been missed, or new forms of these values, or old forms of these values in new and surprising places” (Eaton, 2009, 273).

13.5 Feminist Interventions in Aesthetics and Gołaszewska’s Theory of the Aesthetic Situation

Gołaszewska’s description of the aesthetic situation expresses intuitions similar to the concepts of feminist philosophy mentioned above. Importantly, Gołaszewska created and developed her concept of empirically and anthropologically oriented aesthetics prior to the advent of feminist academic research in aesthetics and the philosophy of art. By applying the feminist research perspective to the analysis of Gołaszewska’s theory of the aesthetic situation, it can be argued that the Polish philosopher anticipated selected ideas undertaken and elaborated several decades later by feminist philosophers. Gołaszewska’s views can therefore be interpreted feministically, as a proposal for a revolutionary approach to aesthetic issues, taking gender perspective into account. This revolutionary quality signifies a transformation of aesthetic theory and its fundamental concepts, rendering them inclusive of and sensitive to both subjective and objective (i.e., cultural, social, political, and gender-related) circumstances. By juxtaposing the main points of Gołaszewska’s theory of the aesthetic situation with the postulates of feminist researchers, we can see how this theory chronologically preceded feminist interventions in aesthetics:

1. To the perception of cultural creations—the aesthetic experience—Gołaszewska added the value of quasi-cognition occurring in the processes of aestheticization of reality. According to Gołaszewska, human cognitive activity and art exist in a synergistic relationship (Gołaszewska, 2001, 31): the subject’s attitude towards

reality may take the form of aestheticization, which is one of many possible ways of referring to the world. This means that no cognitive activity, including contact with art, is universal; rather, it is simultaneously subjective, individual, intellectual, and aesthetic (Gołaszewska, 1984a, 153). Emphasis on the subjectivity and individuality of (aesthetic) experiences, in conjunction with rejection of the ideals of objectivity and universality, is one of the postulates of feminist researchers, in terms of both aesthetics and philosophy as a whole (Garry & Pearsall, 1996; Harding, 1991, 32–34; Longino, 1990, 62–82; Michna, 2018, 85–123).

2. In Gołaszewska's view, the aesthetic situation always occurs in a specific place and at a specific time, in specific cultural and social conditions, with the participation of subjects characterized by strictly defined consciousness. The aesthetic situation is therefore socially constructed and socially situated. The model description of the aesthetic situation must therefore take into account potential variations and deviations resulting from the individual character of aesthetic experiences. Thus understood, the aesthetic situation is inclusive and open to diversity of the subjects of art (creators and recipients) and their experiences. In short, it is consistent with the postulate of inclusiveness put forward by feminist aestheticians such as Cox, Brand Weiser, Eaton, Hein, Korsmeyer, and Lauter (Cox, 1990, 43–62; Brand Weiser, 2006, 166–189; Eaton, 2009, 272–275; Hein, 1990, 281–291; Hein & Korsmeyer, 1993; Korsmeyer, 2004, 2013, 8–11; Lauter, 1993, 21–34). Today, inclusiveness is also one of the cognitive ideals and the overriding moral and political imperative of intersectional feminism (Zack, 2005).
3. According to Gołaszewska, a significant role in the description of the aesthetic situation is played by psychological and sociological perspectives which include a socially and culturally situated subject possessing a specific set of tools for the reception and interpretation of art within the scope of research. In other words, the shape of the aesthetic situation is influenced by the experiences, sensitivity, emotionality, intellectual level, and sociocultural circle of a recipient, situated in a specific place and at a specific time, who, as such, contributes to aesthetic value. Moreover, within the scope of the aesthetic situation, these are incorporated as significant social and cultural limitations of the personality of the creator as well as of the whole psychological sphere related to the creative process. The creator, also subject to certain sociocultural conditions, creates a work of art containing a certain value. Taking into account the positive value and the impact of subjective aspects of creativity and the reception of art on the aesthetic situation is one of the fundamental postulates of feminist researchers, as expressed, for example, within the above-mentioned framework of standpoint aesthetics (Eaton, 2009, 272–275).
4. In Gołaszewska's approach, aesthetic experience is transgressive—since her theory of the aesthetic situation transcends the boundaries of traditional aesthetic concepts developed on the basis of dominant philosophical currents—as well as transformative—since the traditional concepts of the creator, work, recipient, and aesthetic experience are transformed. Transcendence of and change in existing aesthetic theory, in reference to artistic and aesthetic practices—or, as

Gołaszewska would call them, facts related to art—are essential postulates of feminist researchers in the field of aesthetics (Brand Weiser & Korsmeyer, 1995; Hein & Korsmeyer, 1993).

5. The methods of studying the aesthetic situation distinguished by Gołaszewska indicate the need to account for networks of different contexts, as well as for the situation's complexity and multi-faceted nature, in its description and analysis (Gołaszewska, 1970a, 13–14). First, study of the aesthetic situation must encompass an analysis of the relationships and dependencies between individual elements in the model approach. Second, it is necessary to consider the historical perspective, within whose framework dependence on the epoch and on cultural, social, and political factors must be taken into account. Nor would any analysis of the aesthetic situation be complete without reference to contemporary factors in both the social and individual dimensions. Despite the intrusive separability of three perspectives (philosophical, historical, and empirical), Gołaszewska, like later feminist scholars, postulated their consolidation and a holistic approach to the aesthetic situation.

13.6 Conclusion

During her many years of work in academia, Gołaszewska became known as a social activist, an outstanding and inspiring researcher, and a teacher of many generations of today's Polish philosophers (Czakov et al., 2018a, 125–128). She was “characterized by her work, not by observing holidays. Her element was activity and organization, not celebration” (Wilkoszewska, 1998, 13). Over several decades, Gołaszewska also became an important organizer of academic life in Poland, which, given the times in which she lived, was a unique achievement.

Gołaszewska's academic *oeuvre*, which is currently being read anew in Poland, may also become an important voice in the contemporary international debate concerning art and its reception and interpretation. It should be emphasized that Gołaszewska, although starting from great philosophical traditions, eventually followed her own path, creating an original aesthetic theory:

The concept of the aesthetic situation introduced here, with its theoretical, methodological, and practical dimensions, was and remains the great achievement of Gołaszewska's *oeuvre*. She may have found the inspiration to develop this concept in Ingarden, or in existentialism and structuralism; nevertheless, the shape it has taken in its conception of aesthetics constitutes a completely original and significant contribution. (Wilkoszewska, 1996, 21)

Gołaszewska's aesthetics should undoubtedly be positioned along the philosophical continuum of Ingarden's phenomenology; however, her theory of the aesthetic situation transcends “traditional” phenomenology and constitutes an important proposal for the reinterpretation of its fundamental assumptions (Serafin, 2014b, 153–169). Gołaszewska's academic *oeuvre* is a mosaic of many different themes and philosophical traditions, yet at the same time—as demonstrated in this article—it defines a research area that was subsequently explored by feminist researchers. Her

multi-faceted description of the aesthetic situation and the experiences and values related thereto is a model example of a theory which accounts for gender perspective and the social location of the subject, and, in this sense, should be seen as anticipating feminist interventions in philosophy and aesthetics.

In particular, I believe that Gołaszewska's theory of the aesthetic situation is a proposition for a model description of aesthetic experience within the framework of feminist philosophy. The aesthetic situation, as Gołaszewska wrote,

is a situation in which the recipient comes into contact with a work of art recognized as the creation of an artist—a creation endowed with values of a specific type. As a result of these values, the work arouses interest in the recipient, evoking a specific type of experience in him or her, defining a specific individual as a recipient of art. (Gołaszewska, 1970b, 34–35)

This means that, in the absence of a situation involving reception, it is impossible to speak of aesthetics in the context of philosophical theory. Basing philosophical reflection on art on the foundation of the aesthetic situation, as proposed by Gołaszewska, affords the opportunity to study issues related to art—its creation, existence and reception—in an inclusive, transgressive manner, without depreciation due to gender. Gołaszewska's aesthetic situation can thus be treated as a component of the general philosophical assumptions related to aesthetics, as well as a methodological basis that can serve as the starting point for feminist research in aesthetics. Perhaps this internationally unknown Polish philosopher succeeded in proposing solutions to current problems in aesthetics which account for the feminist perspective—solutions which feminist researchers have been seeking since the late 1980s.

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