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## ABSTRACT

### The Aesthetics of S. K. Langer

The paper attempts to present major points in Suzanne K. Langer's aesthetics, with special reference to her ideas on drama in general, and on comedy and tragedy in particular. By discussing her concept of symbolization, an exposé of the arguments for the expressive theory of art is presented in the terminologies of Langer. This introduces Langer's real contribution which is essentially eclectic. Yet it presents a fresh look at this theory.

Within this framework of reference a discussion of Langer's own definition of drama, focussing on the genres of tragedy and comedy, and concluding with Langer's formulation of artistic perception, its function and importance in our life as 'recipients' and 'percepients', are presented.

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مطابع جامعة أم القرى

## The Aesthetics of S. K. Langer

Suzanne K. Langer is one of the most influential present day theorists of art . Her definition of art as the presentation of “forms symbolic of human feeling” is the back bone of her philosophy of art. Langer claims that present day emphasis on the role played by symbols in thinking should lead to a new era in philosophy. The symbols she is concerned with here are the symbols of art. However, she defines symbols as “any devicewhereby we are enabled to make an abstraction”. She further elaborates by stating that a symbol is, “an outward device for presenting an inward state”<sup>(1)</sup>. For the inward state, a purely experiential matter, to be intelligible it has to be objective. The outward device that achieves these goals of namely intelligibility and objectivity, is the symbolic forms. The metamorphosis of symbols into “semblance” and “illusion” is done to enable both artist and audience, or “perceiver and percipient”, as Langer describes them, to conceive the emotion<sup>(2)</sup>. Thus, through physical distance and aesthetic attitude and without ever resorting to the unnecessary task of recreating the emotion, an understanding of the feelings is acquired. In this way works of art can be presented and seen as images of the forms of feelings. Ultimately, this leads to the formulation of a new way of feeling, and that, according to Langer, is the beginning of a cultured age.

Langer herself summarized the significance of her work as follows :

“The theory itself [that the Art Symbol], which I have here set forth, is not really one person’s work, It is a step -- and I think, an important one -- in a philosophy of art on which many aestheticians have already labored, the theory of expressive form... It was Cassirer -- though he never regarded himself as an aesthetician -- who hewed the keystone of the structure, in his broad and disinterested study of symbolic forms; and I, for my part, would put the stone in place, to join and sustain what so far we have built”<sup>(3)</sup>.

Her teacher, the neo-Kantian Ernst Cassirer attempts in such studies as *An Essay on Man* (1944) and *The Philosophy of symbolic Forms* (1953), to chart a direction for a general theory of symbolic culture in which literary symbolism can find its place. Cassirer's work is traced to and guided by the philosophy of Immanuel Kant<sup>(4)</sup>. In addition, her work feeds on such thinkers as William James, George Santayana, Henri Bergson, Benedetto Croce, and A. N. Whitehead.

This paper is an attempt to present the major themes of Suzanne Langer's philosophy of art, which she had been elucidating and developing for many years. Essentially, her study is an attempt at constructing an intellectual framework for philosophical studies relating to art. Relying heavily on art journals, on the consultation, advice, and criticism of artists (whom she knew well) and on her knowledge of music, Langer formulates an aesthetics that represents as closely as possible the artist's point of view.

#### **Symbolization<sup>(5)</sup> :**

According to Langer, "man is in a constant process of ideation"<sup>(6)</sup>. That is to say, all that may come across man's senses passes through the mind, and comes out in the form of symbols. This process of concept formation, or in the terms of Langer, of 'ideation', 'abstraction', 'externalization', or 'symbolization' is characteristically human: "The symbol-making function is one of man's primary activities, like eating, looking or moving about. It is the fundamental process of his mind, and goes on all the time"<sup>(7)</sup>. Therefore, man, "the symbol-making being", has characteristically human needs, and chief of these is the need of symbolization. A compulsive need to transform experience into symbols, or his inward state into outward forms. Sometimes he is aware of this constant process, sometimes he merely finds its results.

Symbols satisfy the needs of man both as a biological being and as a human being. The biological needs of man -- self preservation, growth, procreation, preservation of species -- manifested themselves in verbal symbols. The accumulation and elaboration of these symbols

contributed to the development of language, a highly complex system. Nonetheless, these biological needs and the functions that meet them fall drastically short of explaining the motives behind other formations of symbols into complex systems. These include rites, ceremonies, and the arts. These complex systems “are (in themselves) hopelessly inappropriate to the preservation and increase of life”<sup>(8)</sup>.

Similarly, according to the theories of genetic psychology, psychoanalysis can not explain adequately and satisfactorily “the love of music, the high development of ritual, the seriousness of art, and the characteristic activity of dreams”<sup>(9)</sup>. The answer can be found only in the nature of man as a human being. In producing these elaborate systems, the human mind serves some primary needs which are characteristically human needs. Basically, it is the need of ‘symbolization’, ‘ideation’, ‘abstraction’ or ‘externalization’.

Therefore, the direct implication of the above elucidation is that all human expression is not primarily practical, or even communicative. Since some parts of our expressions can be explained on the basis that they are satisfying the needs of symbolization only. Basically, these expressions are “completing in overt action the brain’s symbolic process”<sup>(10)</sup>. Moreover, “ritual.

is essentially the active termination of symbolic transformation of experience”<sup>(11)</sup>.

Furthermore, symbolization is a comprehensive process that encompasses all the activities of the brain. Here, Langer gives further definition and elucidation of this process :

“symbolization is pre-rational, but not prerational. It is the starting point of an intellection in the human sense, and is more general than thinking, fancying, or taking action”<sup>(12)</sup>.

Symbolization takes place in the domain of imagination. It manifests itself simultaneously with the discovery of language. It employs non-discursive, non-linear, but encompassing symbols of imagination. While language can symbolize only through discursive order, i. e. through grammatically ordered set of words<sup>(13)</sup>. It has a

vocabulary, a syntax; its elements are words with fixed meanings prior to the combination. According to the rules of syntax, words are combined to produce new meanings. meanings are successively understood. A picture is an example of a non-discursive, or presentational symbol. It has no conventional vocabulary, but only a recognizable technique of producing it. Its elements are units without independent meanings or even fixed meanings. Its elements are presented simultaneously and in an integral way, to be understood only through the meaning of the whole<sup>(14)</sup>.

In man's life, symbols formulate two distinct orders of reality. They use the logical and scientific functions of speech, which represent language. They also facilitate the functions of artistic expressions, which create art. That is to say, symbols are either representative or expressive. In the first instance they are instruments, and, in the second, they are both instruments and ends.

Using the laws of discursive order, one set of symbols represents objective reality. Art symbols express subjective reality using the laws of its non-discursive order. Both types of symbols have an indispensable value.

In other words, the nature of the laws that govern the inner world is somewhat different from those laws that govern the outer world. The laws of expressing the inner world are the laws of imagination, which are the laws of non-discursive thinking and presentation as well. On the other hand, the laws of expressing the outer world are the laws of logic, which are the laws of discursive thinking and presentation.

### **Feeling as Content of Symbols :**

However, this does not mean that the complex systems of rituals, rites, ceremonies and the arts are to be treated as symbols for thought, or products of thought. According to Langer, they are to be "treated as expressions of emotions, feelings, desires.. They are symptoms of the inner life, like tears and laughter, crooning, or profanity"<sup>(15)</sup>.

Langer defines feeling as “everything which is not speakable thought”. The word ‘feeling’ is intended to be used as a special term inclusive of all possible meanings of the word as far as it relates to and designates the non-discursive sensations of subjective reality.

As far as art is concerned, Langer’s central position is that art meets a basic human -- the need of understanding the subjective experience of feeling. This inner world cannot be understood in the same way as the outer world of objects is understood, though symbols of the same kind are used for both. For the outer world, the usual symbols are words. Words symbolize in the strictest sense: they stand for other things. But language is not enough to express the complex life of feeling. Here is needed a special kind of symbol, a work of art, or an art symbol. An art symbol presents feeling directly in an abstract form, to be perceived in itself.

Thus, art is an expression of feeling. Its mode of expression is non-discursive. This expression meets a basic human need, the need to understand the inner world, the subjective reality of human nature.

### **Art as a Structure of Feeling :**

The philosophy of symbolism is the basis of Langer’s aesthetics. She defines art as “the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling”<sup>(16)</sup>. The process of producing works of art is in itself art. Therefore, the artist is a creator, not an arranger, a recorder, a reactor, not an imitator. The work of art is something new and has nothing to do with the thing of which it is made. The forms the artist creates are not forms of existent things or events, but they are in Langer’s terminology “virtual objects”<sup>(17)</sup>. To be virtual, according to Langer, is to be a “semblance” of something, not in the sense of being an imitation or representation of it, but to be a new model self-enclosed, and obeying the laws which describe it. Thus, the space



of painting is virtual not real space and the time of music is virtual time and not real time. The word "symbolic" in the above definition is used in a special sense : that of presenting an idea, or an understanding of human feeling, not of standing for it. The product of artistic creation is an art symbol. In contrast to this is the symbol, which stands for something, incomplete in itself, and which is always a component of, or a device in the structure of an art symbol.

The above definition of art is the crux of Langer's theory of art. The process of creating or even perceiving a work of art is in no way a process of "catharsis" for the artist or the percipient. For art is neither direct expression of feelings nor the producing of feeling in the percipient. Only ideas of feelings or the artist's understanding or knowledge of feeling are formulated "in the sense of formulating an idea for conception"<sup>(18)</sup>.

Langer uses the term "expression" as a principle in artistic creation. She distinguishes between artistic expression and every day expression of feelings :

An artist, then, expresses feeling, but not in the way a politician blows off steam or a baby laughs and cries. He formulates that elusive aspect of reality that is commonly taken to be amorphous and chaotic; that is, he objectifies the subjective realm. What he expresses is, therefore, not his own actual feelings, but what he knows about feeling. A work of art expresses a conception of life, inward reality. But it is neither a confessional nor a frozen tantrum : it is a developed metaphor, a non-discursive symbol that articulates what is verbally (except in poetry) ineffable -- the logic of consciousness itself <sup>(19)</sup>.

Everyday expressions are largely cathartic. Artistic expression is the articulation of feeling.

### **Semblance and Illusion in Art Symbols :**

The artistic process, the process of creating works of art, according to Langer, is organic, and not mechanical. The feeling will gradually reveal itself in a form that has the living rhythm of organic life. The product of this process, the work of art, or the symbol is one, complete and indivisible whole.

Perception, according to the well-known theory of **Gestalt** psychology, is an instantaneously “unified physical, psychological, or symbolic configuration having properties that cannot be derived from its parts”<sup>(20)</sup>. Thus, the artist begins with a subjective knowledge of the idea of a feeling. Then, in expressing this feeling, he is guided by two major principles of artistic composition :

1. Semblance.
2. Illusion .

To articulate the form of an art symbol to the point where it coincides unmistakably with forms of feeling and living to achieve semblance. In other words, semblance is a guiding principle in the process of making an art symbol’s form look organic, or has the appearance of being organic, life-like. Illusion is also a guiding principle that should dominate the process of setting off and separating the art symbol from the surrounding world of actuality. For illusions occur when things are not what they look, appear, or seem to be. Illusion as it is used here refers primarily to the process of making the objects in an art symbol look like virtual objects. Those two principles are interrelated in many ways<sup>(21)</sup>.

To articulate the vital form is to achieve a high degree of congruity between the symbolic form and the form of some vital experience. This requires the completion of a preceding process of abstracting the form, by “banning all irrelevancies that might obscure its logic, and especially divesting it of all its usual meanings, so that it may be open to new ones”<sup>(22)</sup>. Form in non-discursive expression can only be known

All cognition of form is intuitive; all relatedness-distinctness, congruence, correspondence of forms, contrast, and synthesis in a total **Gestalt** -- can be known only by direct insight, which is intuition<sup>(23)</sup>.

On the other hand, the process of abstracting form can be achieved by following these procedures :

1. Detaching the form from actuality to give it "otherness," "self-sufficiency"<sup>(24)</sup>.
2. Making it plastic "so it may be manipulated in the interests of expression instead of practical signification"<sup>(25)</sup>.
3. Making it transparent when "the Gestalt of living experience guides its author in creating it"<sup>(26)</sup>.

**Virtual Elements :**

The virtual, according to Langer, is what distinguishes the reality of art from the world of practical affairs. The work of art, the art symbol, or the total organic form is composed of materials -- a story line, scenery, words, metaphors, paint, clay -- which are the art elements. They can be anything that the artist makes use of in his composition ; and they have to be recognized as virtual elements. Those elements contribute to the organic nature of the whole. They are "not juxtaposed parts, but interacting elements" that form the art work<sup>(27)</sup>. Therefore, artistic composition, its details, and its elements, are interrelated in such a way that the elimination or addition of a single part affects the composition of the whole. Each part has not only a meaning in relation to the whole, but a new quality :

Elements are factors in the semblance ; and as such they are virtual themselves, direct components of the total form. In this they differ from materials, which are actual. Paints are materials, and so are the colors they have in the tube or on the palette ; but the colors in a picture are elements, determined

by their environment. They are warm or cold, they advance or recede, enhance or soften or dominate other colors ; they create tensions or distribute weight in a picture. Colors in a Paint box don't do such things. They are materials and lie side by side in their actual undialectical materialism<sup>(28)</sup>.

While the "abstracted form of organic relations and vital rhythms is only an ingredient in the total expression of feeling, "it is the framework; and, once it is established, the whole realm of sense-perception furnishes symbolic material".

Surfaces, colors, textures and lights and shadows, tone of every pitch and quality, vowels and consonants, swift or heavy motions -- all things that exhibit definite qualities -- are potential symbols of feeling, and out of these the illusion or organic structure is made<sup>(30)</sup>.

Langer emphasizes over and over the importance of achieving the semblance of a living form for the art symbol; and the difference between the elements of an art symbol and those of real life.

If art is, as I believe it is, the expression of human consciousness in a single metaphorical image, that image must somehow achieve the semblance of living form. All the principles we have just considered must have their analogues in those of artistic creation. This is indeed the case... (However) Artistic form is a projection, not a copy. Consequently there is no direct correlation between the constituents of an organism and the elements in a work of art. Art has its own laws, which are laws of expressiveness. Its own elements are all created forms, not material ingredients; such elements cannot be compared to physical functions. only their product -- the expressive related to those of life itself<sup>(31)</sup>.

### Virtual Objects :

According to Langer, every work of art has a primary illusion. This illusion is created .

The primary illusion of any art genre is the basic creation wherein all its elements exist ; and they, in turn, produce and support it. It does not exist by itself ; “primary” does not mean first established, but always established where any elements are given at all<sup>(32)</sup>.

The creation of virtual space in plastic arts is the primary illusion. This virtual space is a visual space which has been taken from objective reality and then harmoniously organized in the art symbol. “The created virtual space is entirely self contained, and independent”<sup>(33)</sup>.

All the discernible elements in a picture support the primary illusion, which is invariant, while the forms that articulate it may vary indefinitely<sup>(34)</sup>.

The created illusion is virtual, not actual, and has nothing to do with reality. Thus, the primary illusion of plastic art, virtual space, “appears in architecture as envisagement of an ethnic domain...” or “the environment created by Selfhood”<sup>(35)</sup>. The primary illusion of dance is a virtual realm of Power -- not actual, physically exerted power, but appearance of influence and agency created by virtual gesture<sup>(36)</sup>. Virtual time is the primary illusion of music.

The primary illusion of one art may appear, and utilized in another, as a secondary illusion. Here is how the primary illusion becomes a secondary one, according to Langer :

As space may suddenly appear in music, time may be involved in visual works. A building, for instance, is the incarnation of a vital space; in symbolization the feeling of the life that belongs to its precincts, it inevitably shows us time, and in some buildings this element becomes impressively strong. Yet architecture does not create a perceptible totality of time, as it does Space; time is a secondary illusion<sup>(37)</sup>.

Thus, allowing for the mixture of illusion, Langer cautions the artist to maintain the dominance of the primary illusion, and the subservience of the other illusion. In other words, she warns against the other illusion taking over and functioning as a primary illusion, in the art expected to deliver one particular primary illusion.

### **Drama as Virtual Future :**

According to Langer, drama is a special mode of poetic art, “with its own version of poetic illusion to govern every detail of the performed piece”<sup>(38)</sup>. She elucidates further :

Once we recognize that drama is neither dance nor literature, nor a democracy of various arts functioning together, but is poetry in the mode of action, the relations of all its elements to each other and to the whole work become clear: the primacy of the script, which furnishes the commanding form; the use of the stage, with or without representational scenery, to delimit the “world” in which the virtual actions exist; the need of making the scene a “place” so that often the designer produces the plastic illusion that is secondary here, but primary in the art of architecture; the use of music and sometimes dance to keep the fictitious history apart from actuality and insure its artistic abstraction; the nature of dramatic time, which is “musical” instead of practical time, and sometimes becomes strikingly evident -- another secondary illusion in poetry, but the primary one of music. The guiding principle in the use of so many transient borrowed illusions is the making of an appearance, not under normal circumstances, like a pretence or social convention, but under the circumstances of the play<sup>(39)</sup>.

Drama presents poetic illusion in different light. Its basic abstraction is the act, which is any physical or mental activity. The total structure of acts is the mode of dramatic action. Drama abstracts vital forms from reality. The purpose of this is “to make them (the forms)

available for unhampered artistic use"<sup>(40)</sup>. This can be achieved only if the work of art demands a physical distance, and provides "aesthetic attitude" for the percipient, in order to be fully appreciated. The primary illusion in drama is the creation of a 'virtual future'.

### Comedy and Tragedy :

This 'virtual future' manifests itself in a comedy as Fortune, and in tragedy as Destiny. The virtual future, or Destiny of tragedy is Fate -- "what the man brings and what the world demands of him"<sup>(41)</sup>. Fortune, which is the virtual future of comedy, is "what the world will bring and the man will take or miss, encounter or escape"<sup>(42)</sup>. Comedy presents the vital form of self-preservation, tragedy of self-consummation<sup>(43)</sup>.

According to Langer, comedy abstracts from reality 'the pure sense of life'. This sense of life is

...the fundamental forms of consciousness: the first reflection of natural activity in sensation, awareness and expectation<sup>(44)</sup>.

The pure sense of life is the commanding feeling of comedy. The pure sense of life, which the comic poet creates, is the sense of 'oncoming', ineluctable future, which is Fortune.

Fortune is developed by comic action. Langer defines comic action as

...the upset and recovery of the protagonist's equilibrium, his contest with the world and his triumph by wit, luck, personal power, or even humorous or ironical, or philosophical acceptance of mischance<sup>(45)</sup>.

The point of comedy for Langer, is not moral distinctions but an amoral sense of vitality and survival. Hence, the comic hero is often "amoral" -- personified **elan vital**<sup>(46)</sup>.

In tragedy, the tragic sense of life is objectified and brought before our eyes. "Tragedy dramatizes human life as potentiality and

fulfillment"<sup>(47)</sup>. Tragedy, according to Langer, has a cadential form, having a rhythmic fall. The tragic rhythm is the deathward advance through "maturity, and decline"<sup>(48)</sup>. Characters are agents, or prime elements in action. Artistic elements are for the sake of the whole<sup>(49)</sup>.

### **Artistic Perception :**

The percipient's artistic perception starts with perceiving the art symbol as a whole **Gestalt** : the appearance of organic form and the illusion of a virtual object :

This manner of perception, which the work is designed to elicit, causes it to appear **organic**; for the evolution of detail out of an indivisible, self-sufficient whole is the characteristic of organisms and the material counterpart of their function, life. And so the work of art seems to have organic structure and rhythms of life, though it is patently not a real organism but a lifeless object<sup>(5)</sup>.

Here it is clear that Langer is not only assuming but expecting the two principles of composition -- semblance and illusion -- to be functioning in such a way that the percipient's 'responsiveness' is not only conditioned but can be predicted. Therefore, depending on the power of manipulating those two principles, the artist is successful or unsuccessful in making the commanding impression the impression of the living form.

Another element that contributes to the percipient's **Gestalt** responsiveness is the abstractedness of the art symbol.

.... The form of organic process which characterizes all vital function has been abstracted, and the abstraction made directly from one specific phenomenon, without the aid of several examples from which a general pattern emerges that may then be symbolically rendered (as in logic)<sup>(51)</sup>.

Furthermore, artistic perception is a matter of direct insight, and not a product of discursive thinking. But this intuitive perception is not necessarily irrational. According to Langer, intuition is



... the fundamental intellectual activity, which produces logical or semantical understanding. It comprises all acts of insight or recognition of formal properties, or relations of significance, and of abstraction and exemplification<sup>(52)</sup>.

Langer concludes that the more one studies artistic composition the more one sees its form as an analogue to organic form :

so I can say, in conclusion, that the more you study artistic composition, the more lucidly you see its likeness to the composition of life itself, from the elementary biological patterns to the great structures of human feeling and personality that are the import of our crowning works of art; and it is by virtue of this likeness that picture, a song, a poem is more than a thing -- that it seems to be a living form, created, not mechanically contrived, for the expression of a meaning that seems inherent in the work itself: our own sentient being, Reality<sup>(53)</sup>.

The details of an art symbol are not seen then as rationally and discursively related, like the details of a logical proposition. Rather, they are seen related like the details of a living organism.

On the other hand, the details or those parts of an art symbol which are usually referred to as 'content', are merely elements pertaining to the form of the art symbol itself. In Langer's terminology the details of the art symbol are virtual elements, which can be discussed in terms of explaining the art symbol, but never in terms of appreciating the art symbol.

### **The Vital Import of Art :**

However, this approach is not satisfactory to the percipient's search for a meaning in the details, 'content', of an art symbol. Langer is quick to point out that 'meaning' belongs to discursive symbolism. Instead, she used the terms 'vital import' to identify the 'meaning' of non-discursive symbolism. Thus, the vital import of an art symbol is

the subjective experience it presents, through the manipulation of the principles of composition -- it is the art symbol as a whole. Form and content, body and soul, are inseparably one complete whole.

The percipient's total felt experience of the art symbol is its vital import, and the art symbol itself would have no significance apart from its vital import.

The meaning of an art symbol is not communicated but revealed. The revelation or understanding of an art symbol begins with an intuition of the whole presented feeling ; it is not gradually built up, like the understanding of a logical proposition. "Contemplation then reveals the complexities of the piece and of its import"<sup>(54)</sup>. Therefore, the criterion of excellence is based on the "virtual results, the artist's success or failure, which is intuitively known or not at all"<sup>(55)</sup>.

On the other hand, other criteria of excellence, or other methods of appreciating an art symbol, such as

... the recognition of how the illusion was made and organized and how the sense of import is immediately given by a strong piece.. that recognition is a product of analysis, reached by discursive reasoning about the work and its effects<sup>(56)</sup>.

are merely explanations of the art symbol.

### **The Cultural Import of Arts :**

Finally, Langer points out the cultural importance of art, which she sees as tied to its vital import. According to Langer "art objectifies the sentience and desire, self-consciousness and world consciousness, emotions and moods..<sup>(57)</sup>.

Thus, "the primary function of art is to objectify feeling so that we can contemplate and understand it"<sup>(58)</sup>. It is as the objectifying of feeling that art has cultural importance. Only artistic genius is capable of such an undertaking.

The contribution of art to the culture is never practical in the usual sense. Art contributes to the advancement of culture in three major ways :

1. "It formulates a new way of feeling, and that is the beginning of a cultural age".
2. "It suggests another matter for reflection".
3. It contributes to the stabilization of culture by

... the education of vision of that we receive in seeing, hearing, reading works of art -- the development of the artist's eye that assimilates ordinary sights (or sounds, motions, or events) to inward vision, and lends expressiveness and emotional import to the world<sup>(59)</sup>.

what "discursive symbolism" -- language in its literal use -- does for our understanding of objective reality, the arts do for our understanding of subjective reality. Art is educator of feeling, developing its scope and quality. The neglect of the education of the arts is a neglect in the education of feeling, and culture may suffer to a great extent for such a neglect :

Art education is the education of feeling, and a society that neglects it gives itself up to formless emotion. Bad art is corruption of feeling. This is a large factor in the irrationalism which dictators and demagogues exploit<sup>(60)</sup>.

Thus, art may indirectly influence not only cultural, but political development as well.

### **Conclusion :**

It has been pointed out throughout the above discussion that Langer developed her ideas within the framework of symbolic philosophy. Her contention is that man is in a constant state of making symbols, or symbolization. Among the activities of the mind, and especially in making art, man uses symbols as structures of feelings. When feelings are put into structures, art symbols are made. guided by

the two major principles for artistic composition of 'semblance' and 'illusion', and by the laws of non-discursive order, art symbols express subjective reality. Through the use of virtual 'not actual' elements, virtual objects are created for the purpose of objectifying our feelings.

Each work of art creates an illusion which remains the primary one, among other illusions, thus deciding its art genre.

Thus, the details of the content of form of a drama are virtual elements in this special mode of poetic art. With comedy evolving as Fortune and tragedy destining Fate, 'virtual future' is manifested.

The 'oncoming' pure sense of life which is glimpsed through the upset and recovery of the personified **elan-vital** is recognized as Fortune. The cadential motion of the tragic sense of life in tragedy is recognized through the deathward advance of the tragic hero.

This way of seeing art contributes to our organically oriented appreciation of the success or failure of the artist in manipulating the principles of "the living form". It also helps us gain an insight, an intuitive perception, in studying an artistic genre as an analogue to organic form.

The percipients' total felt experience is its "vital import". Its cultural import lies in its "objectifying" of our feelings so that we can contemplate and understand it.

In this way, Langer's work can be viewed as an ambitious project that attempts to formulate and integrate aesthetics within a grandiose scheme for the order of things that is colored by a certain philosophy which derives its basic tenets from a distinct epistemology.

Viewed as such, perhaps it is now more urgent than at any other point in history that one can look on such projects to see that, after all, all things can fit into place and not fall apart, at least cognitively. That is to say, works of art, as well as theories of art are products of their own milieu evolving through certain definite mechanisms that eventually color their character, regulate their being, and nourish their development.

## NOTES

- 1 . S. K. Langer, **Feeling and Form** (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 51.
- 2 . The perceivability theory stipulates how a work of art is made perceivable through a process of conditioning on the basis of semblance and illusion to make time audible, space visible, and life imaginable.
- 3 . Quoted in **A History of Literary Aesthetic in America**.
- 4 . For more detailed analysis of this genealogy, see Hazard Adams, **Philosophy of the Literary Symbolic** (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 1983), pp. 200-232.
- 5 . Langer distinguishes between signs (widespread in the organic realm) and symbols (present to human awareness), noting the tendencies of empiricists to forget the extent to which sense data are infused by symbols. She notes and analyzes the transformation of symbols in psychoanalysis, symbolic logic, and in the structuring of works of art, distinguishing between the open presentational symbols of art and the representational symbols of science tied to dictionary meanings. This distinction is first drawn in **Philosophy in A New Key** p. 31. In **Feeling and Form** Langer replaces signs by signals. So that both signals and symbols may be grouped under the general heading of "signs". Within the limits of this paper, no more can be done than identifying Langer's distinction between signals and symbols. While signals are rooted in biological reflexes and are symptomatic of immediate emotional conditions, symbols are vehicles for the conception of objects. They are not mere biological symptoms of the physical presence of a thing or condition, they are symbols highly "charged" with humanly formulated significance.
- 6 . S. K. Langer, **Feeling and Form**, p. 171.
- 7 . *Ibid.*, p. 41. Ernst Cassirer in his **Philosophy of Symbolic Forms** defines man as animal symbolicum - the language using animal.
- 8 . S. K. Langer, **Philosophy in a New Key** (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 43.
- 9 . *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- 10 . *Ibid.*, p. 83.

- 11 . Ibid., p. 87.
- 12 . S. K. Langer, **Feeling and Form**, p. 42.
- 13 . Laws of discursive order : Human thought is described as discursive for it has to move successively progressing from one concept to another, and from proposition to another toward a more complete, clear and comprehensive Knowledge. Laws of imagination or non-discursive order refers to the sensual cognition of images in their absence thus producing an instantaneously understandable unified and complete world.
- 14 . S. K. Langer, **Philosophy in a New Key**, pp. 90-94.
- 15 . Ibid., p. 40.
- 16 . S. K. Langer, **Problems of Art** (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957) p. 126.
- 17 . Physicists call the space projected in a mirror image a **virtual space**. From this technical usage in physics, Langer derives her use of "virtual". See Samuel Bufford, "Suzanne Langer's Two Philosophies of Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31 1971: 9-20.
- 18 . S. K. Langer, **Problems of Art**, p. 25.
- 19 . Ibid., p. 27.
- 20 . **Gestalt** : A German term meaning "form, shape, or figure". It stipulates that perceptual content in a series of configurations or totalities rather than a series of discursive simple perceptual elements. The definition of the word **Gestalt** in **The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language**.
- 21 . S. K. Langer, **Problems of Art**, p. 166.
- 22 . S. K. Langer, **Feeling and Form**, pp. 65-68.
- 23 . Ibid., p. 54.
- 24 . Ibid., p. 378.
- 25 . Ibid., p. 59.
- 26 . Ibid., p.59-60.
- 27 . Ibid., p. 60.
- 28 . Ibid., 370.
- 29 . Ibid., 84-85.
- 30 . S. K. Langer, **Problems of Art**, p. 174.
- 31 . Ibid., 180.
- 32 . Ibid., p. 54.

- 33 . Ibid., p. 84.
- 34 . Ibid., p. 72.
- 35 . Ibid., p. 89.
- 36 . Ibid., pp. 99-101.
- 37 . Ibid., p. 174-175.
- 38 . Ibid., p. 118.
- 39 . Ibid., p. 320.
- 40 . Ibid., p. 322.
- 41 . Ibid., p. 312.
- 42 . Ibid., p. 352.
- 43 . Ibid., p. 352.
- 44 . Ibid., p. 351.
- 45 . Ibid., p. 327.
- 46 . **elan vital** : A philosophical concept developed by the French spiritualistic philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941).  
According to Bergson, it is the prime moral working in the world. Living has to be seen as a series of efforts in which life gains victory over matter and attains self-consciousness. The theory of **elan vital** is historically important as a reaction against the machine theory and the materialism of the second half of the 19th century Ibid., p. 331.
- 47 . Ibid., p. 346.
- 48 . Ibid., p. 352.
- 49 . Ibid., p. 351.
- 50 . Ibid., p. 350.
- 51 . Ibid., p. 178.
- 52 . Ibid., p. 174.
- 53 . Ibid., p. 66.
- 54 . Ibid., p. 66.
- 55 . Ibid., p. 379.
- 56 . Ibid., p. 407.
- 57 . Ibid., p. 406.
- 58 . S. K. Langer, *Philosophical Sketches* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), p. 90.
- 59 . Ibid., p. 90.
- 60 . Ibid., p. 112.

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## ملخص البحث باللغة العربية

تحاول هذه الدراسة تقديم النقاط الأساسية في النظرة الجمالية لدى سن . ك . لانجر لفهم الأفكار العامة حول المسرحية وخصوصاً الملهاة والمساة . وذلك عن طريق مناقشة مفهوم « الترميز » لدى لانجر ضمن النظرة التعبيرية بالمصطلحات التي إستعملت بطريقة انتقائية من قبل لانجر للوصول إلى إبراز إسهامها الحقيقي في هذا المجال . فمن خلال هذا الإطار تناقش تعاريف لانجر المسرحية والأجناس المسرحية من ملهاة ومساة لتقديم صياغة للرؤية الفنية ووظيفتها وأهميتها في حياتنا اليومية كمتلقين وكفاعلين .