

# Aesthetic Investigations

Published on behalf of the Dutch Association of Aesthetics



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## Persistent Autonomy and Romanticism

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**Abstract:** Autonomy in the arts is generally considered an outdated concept, an atavism that is only relevant to outsiders and to people who have a mere traditional, if not completely obsolete understanding of the artistic and aesthetic field. Autonomy in this view has little to do with contemporary discussions about art and artistic practices. The contemporary relevance of the concept is illustrated with the existence and the curriculum of the university English department, which ‘has modernist autonomy in its genetic code’, and also with the institution of the Nobel Prize in Literature, whose winners have been defending aesthetic autonomy in their ceremony speeches every time. Those examples suggest that autonomy is more rejected in the academic field than in the practices of, in this case, the world of literature.

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Autonomy in the arts is generally considered an outdated concept, an atavism that is only relevant to outsiders and to people who have a mere traditional, if not completely obsolete understanding of the artistic and aesthetic field. Autonomy in this view has little to do with contemporary discussions about art and artistic practices. The very first sentence of a recent study about autonomy in literary fiction, Andrew Goldstone’s *Fictions of Autonomy* (2013) for example reads: ‘In literary studies, we regard aesthetic autonomy as an idea whose time has passed.’<sup>1</sup>

Goldstone starts his book with the observation ‘that the belief that art — including literature — is a law unto itself, neither governed by nor responsible to extra-aesthetic concerns, has few defenders among scholars today.’<sup>2</sup>

This observation implicates those who discuss the relevance of the concept of autonomy in the arts in a non-historical or non-contextual approach, as being outside the academic field. As Goldstone puts it: ‘Contextualism is the professional norm.’<sup>3</sup>

So, Goldstone discusses autonomy in the arts as merely a historical phenomenon, exclusively bound to modernism. However, even then one could ask, what the relevance of such a book might be, beginning, as it does, with this firm negative statement about autonomy. The question presents itself again at the end. In ‘Epilogue: Autonomy Now’, Goldstone eventually defends a ‘relative autonomy’, avoiding the extreme position of ‘would-be debunkers of all claims to aesthetic autonomy’ as well as the opposing ‘would-be celebrants of the religion of art’.<sup>4</sup> The contemporary relevance of the concept is illustrated with the existence and the curriculum of the university English department, which ‘has modernist autonomy in its genetic code’, and also with the institution of the Nobel Prize in Literature, whose winners have been defending aesthetic autonomy in their ceremony speeches every time. Those examples suggest that autonomy is more rejected in the academic field than in the practices of, in this case, the world of literature.

## I. OBSOLETE AND PERSISTENT AUTONOMY

Nevertheless, both fields have shown continuous suspicion towards the contemporary relevance of autonomy. In the introduction of *Aesthetic Autonomy: Problems and Perspectives* (2004) Liesbeth Korthals Altes presents four reasons for the decay of autonomy in literature. In the first place, literature treated as merely an aesthetic experience, lost importance in an academic world that became interested in ‘less closed disciplines’ like ‘sociology, cultural history, philosophy of culture, ethics.’<sup>5</sup> Second, a certain democratization of literature itself has led to a more pluralistic view on the identity of the literary work, making it sometimes difficult to know what belongs to literature and what doesn’t. Third, the traditional difference between what is seen as literary fiction and what is understood as nonfiction, referring to reality, has become increasingly less evident, in literature as well as in literary scholarship. And fourth, the so called ethical turn in literature studies, and deconstructivist criticism on the literary identity of a text have resulted in even more scepticism towards such a thing as autonomy.<sup>6</sup>

In the other arts, comparable developments have taken place. To start with, a long avant-garde tradition in all the arts became ever more critical about the gap between art and life and between art and society.<sup>7</sup> Further, since the 1970s the border between mass culture and what was traditionally seen as ‘high art’ has become rather vague. The once stable difference between art and popular culture has been blurred by new genres and art practices like comics, slam poetry, web design, pop music, cabaret, fashion and even commercials, often undermining the traditional belief in the autonomy of art. In

the academic world, most art disciplines were assimilated with, or at least seriously influenced by Cultural Studies and framed in postmodern theories that rejected autonomy for many reasons. Not only because the artistic practices themselves have considerably changed, but also because interdisciplinary research and the approach of social studies have become ever more important in the last decades, all in line with the reasons just mentioned for the decay of autonomy.

In contemporary academic discourse, the concept of autonomy in art is usually related to modernism, in literature as well as in the other arts, and since the decline of modernism it has become a historical rather than an aesthetic phenomenon for most scholars indeed.<sup>8</sup> And if the relevance of the concept of autonomy is not denied for historical reasons, it is rejected with sociological and political arguments, reducing autonomy, to put it bluntly, to an expression of the ideology of the ruling class, an argument that most often goes back to Pierre Bourdieu's *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* (1979).<sup>9</sup>

Yet, the topic of aesthetic autonomy re-emerges again and again, not only in historical studies of modernism and in epilogues and footnotes in the academic field, but also in the practices of the arts themselves. Several symposia and public debates over the last few years discuss the threatened independence of the arts in education and in many other practices, like museums, bookshops, newspaper criticism, new media, due to a growing commercial culture and a more consumerist attitude towards the arts. These developments are enhanced by a populist political climate, that is extremely critical of the pretensions of the arts. In this critical view, the arts are not able to prove their societal or economic relevance. Although many discussions in these contexts focus on autonomy as an outdated, modernist concept, several contributors in the field of the arts consider autonomy as something that is crucial in the aesthetic discourse of today.<sup>10</sup>

Instead of repeating the historicity and irrelevance of the autonomy concept it may be interesting to ask, why it keeps reappearing even though it has been criticized continuously. If we keep in mind Peter Bürger's analysis in his classic *Theory of the avant-garde* (1984), that the avant-garde failed to abolish autonomy in the arts and that such an abolishment appeared to be impossible in what he calls 'late capitalist society', it may still be worthwhile to ask ourselves, how to understand the persistent belief in autonomy after the end of the avant-garde, a belief that has so often been rejected and yet is still present, and may be not as obsolete as main stream theory in cultural studies and the humanities suggest.<sup>11</sup> In doing so we can better go back to the emergence of the belief in autonomy of the last few centuries rather than adding still another explanation about the irrelevance of the concept.

## II. ROMANTIC DISCOURSE

It cannot be denied that the social sense of the autonomy concept is relevant for the aesthetic field, as has been explained by Bürger as well as by Adorno and many others.<sup>12</sup> Social autonomy is the result of the historical differentiation in which the production of artworks becomes independent from the context of the church and the aristocracy, accompanied by an emerging art market and professionalization of the artist. The outcome of this development is reflected in the discourse of the artist as genius, in which even the public doesn't seem to play any significant role anymore. As John Keats wrote in a letter to Reynolds in 1818: 'I never wrote one single line of Poetry with the least Shadow of public thought.'<sup>13</sup> And the American romantic painter Washington Allston said to the autonomous artist: 'Trust your own genius, listen to the voice within you, and sooner or later she will make herself understood not only to you, but she will enable you to translate her language to the world, and this is which forms the only real merit of the work of art.'<sup>14</sup> Art can only reach the world as an expression of the personal genius of the independent artist.

Although the social concept of autonomy and the aesthetic use of the concept are historically intertwined, we can acknowledge, following Jason Gaiger in a recent article in the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 'the social and economic differentiation of art without accepting the stronger, normative view that the value of art lies in its independence from any practical purpose.'<sup>15</sup> This, however, seems to confirm Goldstone's statement that contextualism is the professional norm without understanding that such a sociological approach isn't any less ideological. The professional norm is a norm indeed.

In understanding the roots of aesthetic autonomy most historians of ideas begin with P.O. Kristeller's analysis of the rise of an aesthetic discourse in the eighteenth century, whereas philosophers often prefer Kant's theory of aesthetic judgement as a starting point.<sup>16</sup> Both views represent important early developments in the Age of Aesthetics. And both views are completely relevant, Kristeller's description of the emergence of 'the modern system of the arts' as well as autonomy based on Kant's judgement of taste as pure disinterested liking (*reinen uninteressierten Wohlgefallen*). But they belong to an aesthetic discourse that, after modernism and with the end of the avant-garde, has lost some of its relevance, and may be accomplished by another, related understanding of the radical change that took place at the end of the eighteenth century.

In discussions about aesthetic autonomy the influence of the romantic discourse has been seriously underestimated. If we follow Isaiah Berlin's dictum, that romanticism is 'the greatest single shift in the consciousness of the West that has occurred', a shift with lasting effects, and if we take this 'radical transformation of Western thought and its influences on the aesthetic discourse up to nowadays' into account, we may find a more prolific approach to some of the debates on autonomy that have taken place over

the last decades.<sup>17</sup> The artistic discourse is still structured by the prominent role of the imagination, the presupposed genius of the artist and the value of expression. Since the outbreak of romanticism they can be seen, to use the words of Goldstone, as the genetic code of the aesthetic field. If we discuss Western art of today, we discuss romantic art. Romanticism is constitutive for art practices since two centuries, its influence is everywhere. Romantic ideas about individuality, creativity, the imagination, the role of the artist, authenticity, and autonomy are still the basic values in contemporary art. ‘So deeply are they embedded in our attitudes and ways of thinking,’ writes Honour, ‘that we are rarely aware of them.’<sup>18</sup>

A century of artistic resistance against those inherent romantic beliefs, starting with Marcel Duchamp and dada, has only reiterated their presence, as I hope to have shown in my book *De romantische orde* (‘The romantic order’). It is hard to give an interpretation of the work of Jeff Koons, to mention an example from this book, without understanding the romantic irony in his oeuvre that brings back the traditional role of the artist, just as it is difficult to discuss the function of the autobiographical in Dave Eggers’s novel *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000) without an understanding of the same kind of romantic irony. This irony is a distinctive characteristic of the romantic discourse, seen as the conflict, to quote Friedrich Schlegel, ‘between the absolute and the relative, the simultaneous consciousness of the impossibility and the necessity of a complete account of the reality.’<sup>19</sup> The basic values of art — expression, imagination and genius — can only exist as long as romantic irony reconciles the opposition between the transcendent and the empirical world, between the absolutist pretensions of art and the relativity of the real, existing artwork. In this approach, the autonomy of the artistic field is not exclusively related to the historical developments Kristeller noted, or to the analysis of the disinterestedness of Kant, but also to the romantic discourse of the values imagination, genius and expression, values that can only exist with romantic irony. In that sense they are all constitutive elements for artistic autonomy.

### III. THE PROVOKING MONSTROSITY OF ART

If we ask which type of autonomy has been discussed and criticized in art, not only in the last few decades, but during the whole last century, we may find that it is in the first place symbolism, and in a broader sense the attitude of aestheticism that emerged during the nineteenth century. This aestheticism is opposed to the moral expectations of the bourgeoisie and can be understood as an effort to create a non-moral world in which beauty is adored and in which daily life and the problems of society are non-existent. Art and life seem to exclude each other. As Gustave Flaubert wrote in a letter to his mother from 1850: ‘You can paint wine, love, women, glory only if you yourself (...) are not a drunkard, nor a lover, nor a husband, nor a soldier boy.

Involved in life, we see it badly, suffer or enjoy it too much. The artist, as I believe, is a monstrosity — something outside nature.<sup>20</sup> And he is not only a monstrosity outside nature; the moral provocations in this tradition can be seen as claims to an independent existence that is in principle immune to any moral or social reproach. Charles Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*<sup>21</sup> is probably the most influential manifestation of such an anti-moral attitude. Baudelaire successfully opposed the so-called bourgeois ideology in a nearly religious, but at the same time consciously provoking adoration for art and beauty, as we can read in the last lines of his 'Hymn to Beauty': 'Are you from heaven or hell, Beauty that we adore? / Who cares? A dreadful, huge, ingenuous monster, you! / So but your glance, your smile, your foot open a door / Upon an Infinite I love but never knew. // From Satan or from God? Who cares? Fierce or serene, / Who cares? Sister to sirens or to seraphim? / So but, dark fey, you shed your perfume, rhythm and sheen / To make the world less hideous and Time less grim.'<sup>22</sup>

The provocation in those lines, and in the work of other writers like Oscar Wilde, Edgar Allan Poe, Théophile Gautier and visual artists like Gustave Moreau or Odilon Redon can be understood in different ways. First, it is a defence of artistic freedom in holding that the daily common world is senseless, ridiculous and boring and that the world of art is the realm in which people, or at least the sensitive artists, find reconciliation. Gautier's 'art for art's sake' only accepts the authority of the imagination, which means that art must be completely free from what society asks for, what morals prescribe and even what the personal life of the artist demands.

But this call for autonomy and absolute freedom, also, more or less openly provokes bourgeois morality, and it therefore participates, implicitly, in moral and societal debates about sexuality, freedom of expression, religion, gender and the like. So, the belief, or rather the ideology of autonomy was not only an artistic escape from society, daily routine and the sterility of the bourgeois world, it also presented another way of life, and in doing so, it has been contributing to debates on moral values as well. Beauty could be a monster. Art opened the door to a realm that could be hell as well as heaven. Nevertheless, quite a few defenders of aesthetic autonomy in the nineteenth century would strongly deny any moral or political relevance in art. Théophile Gautier, for example, criticizes writers who pretend to humanize the world in the tradition of Saint Simon and Charles Fourier. Gautier opposed the idea of progress and is said to have confessed 'that he would gladly renounce his political rights in exchange for seeing an authentic painting by Raphael or a beautiful woman in the nude.'<sup>23</sup> In his article 'Aesthetic Autonomy and Literary Commitment', Arnold Heumakers makes two important observations. First, he argues that even the most famous and ardent defenders of an anti-utilitarian aestheticism in the nineteenth century were inconsistent, by believing in societal progress, or, one way or another, got involved with politics. In the second place, he shows how French aestheticism, which proved to be so influential during the

nineteenth century (eventually becoming a target for later avant-garde criticism), is grounded in a German romanticism in which the ideal of pure beauty unavoidably superseded its own limits.

To start with the first observation, Heumakers gives three striking examples of such inconsistency by the prophets of artistic autonomy. During the July Monarchy, Théophile Gautier wrote an official poem in honour of the Martyrs of the Revolution of 1830. And, in the revolutionary year 1848, he supported the idea of progress and asked the artist to play a role in modern civilization, completely ignoring his belief in art for art's sake. Charles Baudelaire, who mildly criticized Gautier for his opportunism, became involved in politics as well, and wrote about 'the childish utopia of the school of art for art's sake.'<sup>24</sup> The third example is Oscar Wilde, who echoed Gautier and Baudelaire in their aestheticism, as in the famous lines of his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891): 'There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.' But at the same time he defended an implicit form of socialism in various articles.<sup>25</sup> And whatever New Critics tried, the successful plays of the 1890s cannot be understood without the moral and social context of British society that was discussed implicitly.

We could, therefore, add another reason for the inconsistencies of these outspoken prophets of artistic autonomy, underlining the second aspect of the provocation earlier mentioned. The bohemian life, the flirtation with illegal practices, sexual freedom and homosexuality, in short, their *byronian* attitude in which the boundaries between life and art that were at times hardly visible, go far beyond an aestheticism that has nothing to do with what was going on in society. On the contrary, the provocations seem to be related to different forms of emancipation and political controversy. So, autonomy, in this context, quite often appears to be an ideological myth rather than a proper description of the artist at work.

#### IV. GERMAN ROOTS AND THE OMNIPRESENCE OF ART

To understand these inconsistencies we have to go back to the origins of the *l'art pour l'art* ideology. The first use of the concept, as far as we know, is from Benjamin Constant's visit to Weimar in 1804 with Madame de Staël. And although the moral provocations of Gautier, Baudelaire and Wilde are far removed from German romanticism and Kant's high moral standards, 'common ground' for the idea of aesthetic autonomy can be found in Kant's definition of taste in his *Critique of Judgement*, as well as in Karl Philipp Moritz's idea that 'the really beautiful must always be understood in opposition to the useful, which will never be perfect in itself.'<sup>26</sup>

The Kantian approach of aesthetic autonomy is manifest in the work of nearly all leading early German romantics, like Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, Novalis, and Schelling. However, their interpretations hardly

ever excluded the relevance of art (and especially ‘poetry’) for the world of politics, morals and religion. How is this possible? To start with, the influence of Friedrich von Schiller’s *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794) was omnipresent in those years. Schiller was convinced that beauty could elevate people and that what he called aesthetic education could bring us to a future ideal world.<sup>27</sup> This ideal world was not contradictory to the denial of interest in Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*; and Schiller’s concept of *Spieltrieb* (‘play drive’) created the ability to reconcile autonomous art with interpretations of moral and political relevance.

Second, most romantics of this period believed, in line with Schiller, that ‘poetry’ (being more or less synonymous to ‘art’ in general) was or had to be the teacher of ‘humanity’. The anonymous *Älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus* by Schelling, Hegel or Hölderlin claims this role for poetry, just like Friedrich Schlegel did a few years later in his *Gespräch über die Poesie* (1800). Since romanticism the realm of art became very broad and non-exclusive. ‘When one sees,’ writes Heumakers, ‘how Schlegel and Novalis tend to enlarge the field of poetry to include everyone and everything, the question inevitably arises as to how all this can be considered as partaking of the autonomy of the aesthetic. If everything is art or poetry, what remains of the meaning of autonomy? A possible answer is that, in this case, aesthetic autonomy also enlarges itself to cover all of reality, so that the difference between art and reality eventually disappears. Indeed, Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel describe the world as a work of art that continually produces itself.’<sup>28</sup>

This ‘totalization of art’ may depart from an autonomous position of disinterestedness, but the idealistic romantic ambitions show at the same time how the artist, in withdrawing from the world, paradoxically becomes a prophet who includes the whole world in his work. ‘The Romantic poets see themselves as a reincarnation of the first legislators and creators of civilization, who, according to ancient tradition, are supposed to have been the first poets as well.’<sup>29</sup> The poet (and in romanticism the poet quite often is synonymous with ‘artist’) becomes a priest; Novalis calls him omniscient, the voice of the universe and the representative of the genius of humanity.<sup>30</sup>

In early romantic poetry and art in England we can recognize a similar paradox. The work of William Blake for example (like the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, 1794) departs from a strictly autonomous interpretation of the imagination but combines often visionary poems (and drawings) with social criticism. This cannot be so easily related to German roots and Kantian autonomy, but the paradox of aesthetic autonomy and social commitment is omnipresent in English romanticism of the years that followed. For instance, a poet like Shelley is well known for his radical aestheticism. But he also wrote the political sonnet *England in 1819* as a response to the brutal Peterloo Massacre in August 1819.<sup>31</sup> Nearly all romantic poets represent both attitudes, with Byron as the most striking example of this enlarged aesthetic autonomy, being a provocative defender of autonomy as much as utterly en-



gaged politically, if we consider, for example, his dramatic role as a liberator of Greece. Byron is also a clear proponent of the romantic irony that creates the possibility of this ambivalence. On the one hand, his work rejects any commitment to a world that he despises, but, at the same time, his work and deeds breathe engagement. The main character in *Child Harold* or in *Don Juan* escape the world, and both are, at the same time, mocking or criticizing war, England, bourgeois bigotry etc. Byron's irony, as Claire Colebrook puts it, 'is a worldly rhetorical tool, directed against those who would turn language into mere cant or mysticism.'<sup>32</sup>

In the other arts we can find this radical ambivalence as well. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood may be known for its aestheticism and as forming a starting point for the Aesthetic Movement later in the century, but most members were concerned with social problems brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Since not only the French principle of art for art's sake has its origins in the romantic discourse, it may become understandable why the realm of art and the realm of religion, politics and social behaviour eventually do not exclude each other. In romantic theories of art the universal pretensions of poetry (i.e. art) presuppose autonomy, whereas at the same moment art is understood as the guide of humanity. 'After all,' writes Victor Hugo succinctly, 'art should be its own goal, teaching, moralizing, civilizing, and edifying along the way.'<sup>33</sup> Though quite less philosophical, this comes close to Schiller's influential approach to the role of art. The inconsistencies of writers like Gautier, Baudelaire, Hugo and Oscar Wilde, and of many romantic painters during the nineteenth century, have to be understood in the romantic tradition of totalization and romantic irony. The romantic holism in art ('poetry'), identifying it eventually with the whole world we live in, undermined its autonomy. But romantic irony, in reconciling the absolute and the relative (art and world), makes it possible for the romantics to continue their believe in autonomy. Romantics do not suffer from this kind of inconsistency since it is characteristic for art as well as life. That makes it understandable how the belief in aesthetic autonomy can still reappear irrespective of the constant criticism. And since the discourse of art, up to today, is determined by what I call elsewhere the romantic order, the paradox of autonomy and commitment to the world is still relevant in discussing and understanding autonomy in the arts and in the aesthetic field today.

## V. PERSISTENT AUTONOMY

If we agree upon this, we have to see that artistic autonomy has never been absolute, or better, in its romantic understanding as totalization of art, was always related to Schiller's ideal of aesthetic education or the romantic hope to 'romanticize the world', as Novalis calls it in his famous words: 'The world must be romanticized. In this way, one finds again its original meaning. Romanticizing is nothing other than a qualitative potentializing. The lower self

becomes identified with a better self in this operation. (...) Insofar as I give the common an elevated meaning, the usual a secret perspective, the known the value of the unknown, the finite an infinite appearance — I thus romanticize.<sup>34</sup> It is the artist, in the first place, who is responsible for romanticizing the world, and it will be clear that in this view the difference between imagination and world, art and daily or social life should be superseded. The implication of this interpretation means that art, even in its most escapist manifestations, may always be concerned with the world, including personal life and the social and political world. Art shows that the world can be different or at least could be perceived differently.

By romanticising the world, art — as well as the whole world — has become ambiguous: nothing is anymore what it is, you don't see what you see, you don't hear what you hear and you don't read what you read. We don't have to give up the concept of autonomy to admit that it never leads to absolute isolation. And we don't have to deny contextualism either as long as we see that it is a sociological, or anthropological approach of the romantic belief that has been constituting art practices for over two centuries. Or contextualism is a historical approach that is not necessarily contradictory to the concept of autonomy in the arts.<sup>35</sup>

Still, the romantic paradox of the belief in, and denial of autonomy is omnipresent in today's artistic practices, even though aesthetic autonomy is mostly considered as obsolete in the academic field, as we have seen. Jason Gaiger's observation quoted earlier may be true: we can acknowledge 'the social and economic differentiation of art without accepting the stronger, normative view that the value of art lies in its independence from any practical purpose.' But, first, the stronger claim is a reduction of artistic autonomy, that can be relevant for the world just because of the independence from any practical purpose, and, secondly, one cannot deny the stronger claim without consequences for the first. Gregory Jusdanis concludes that 'the idea that the art world was free of social and state control opened up a conceptual forum in society from which artists and intellectuals were able to criticize a host of oppressive systems from absolutism to capitalism, from sexism to imperialism. The exercise of intellectual freedom was primarily an aesthetic enterprise, based on the call that art should be free, originally from the priest, the prince, and then from the entrepreneur, the police, and the bureaucrat. In other words, the capacity of intellectuals to evaluate reigning social, cultural, and political norms was ensured by the dominion originally declared for art.'<sup>36</sup>

Following Adorno, Jusdanis explains that it is autonomy that makes art politically relevant. We need counter versions of nature, to examine the difference between a reality and its imagined reconstructions. Art, however, 'is political not only in terms of its contents (...) but also in terms of its autonomous structure.'<sup>37</sup> But we can only understand the paradoxical heteronomy of art and world, and the persistence of the concept of aesthetic autonomy, if we relate it to Friedrich Schiller's influence and to the roman-

tics, with their so called totalization of the arts, and their irony, because they structured this critical potential of the whole artistic field. Which means that we have to be conscious of the persistence of romantic values in the artistic field.

Many discussions about the importance and relevance of the arts nowadays are related to the question whether the arts are an autonomous realm or not. In all fields of education, one asks for justification to teach literature and other art forms. The political support for subsidizing art institutions like museums, libraries and concert halls is waning. In the media, many manifestations of autonomous art have become less important, and it is often said to be elitist to broadcast art as such. In this context, the discussion about artistic and aesthetic autonomy is not without importance, since the common doubt that autonomy still is a relevant factor has weakened the justification for supporting art institutions, art education, and an open mind to all those art works that form the background and inspiration to the whole field of aesthetics.<sup>38</sup>

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## NOTES

1. Goldstone 2013, 1.
2. Ibid.
3. Goldstone 2013, 188.
4. Goldstone 2013, 194.
5. Korthals Altes 2004, 4.
6. Idem, 5-18.
7. A classical analysis in Peter Bürger 1984 (orig. *Theorie der Avantgarde*, 1974). An early and influential criticism in literature is Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle. A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930*, 1931.
8. Gaiger 2009, 46.
9. Bourdieu 1987.
10. A few examples are *Aesthetic Autonomy & Heteronomy*, Conference University of York, 2 February 2011; *Autonomy Symposium*, 7-9 October 2011, Van Abbe Museum Eindhoven; *Creativity, Autonomy, Function*. Theory of Architecture Conference Istanbul April 2013; *Art as Commitment. International Conference*, Museum of Modern Art Ljubljana, 7 December 2013; Symposium *The Ethics of Literary Autonomy*, 6-7 February 2014, Utrecht. Cf. Jusdanis 2005, 22-54; Boomgaard 2006, 31-38; Hulatt 2013; Goldstone 2013, 186 ff..
11. Bürger 1984, 50-54.
12. Bürger 1984, 35 ff.; Adorno, Adorno, and Tiedemann 1984 (orig. *Ästhetische Theorie in Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 7, 1972); cf. Zuidervaart 1990, 61-77; Goldstone 2013, 3.
13. John Keats in a letter to Reynolds (9 April 1818), quoted in Abrams 1953, 26.
14. Honour 1991, p .16.
15. Gaiger 2009, 52.
16. Kristeller 1951, 496-527; Kristeller 1952, 17-46; Kant 1952 (orig. *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790).
17. Berlin 1999, 1; Honour 1991, 21 ff., 319. The background of this approach is Doorman 2004; cf. Eldridge 2001.
18. Honour 1991, 319.
19. Wellek 1955, 14; cf. Behler 1972, 66 ff., 85ff.; Doorman 2004, 121-148; cf. Handwerk 2000, 203-225; Feilchenfeldt 1995, 557-562; Rush 2006, 173-195.
20. Gustave Flaubert to his mother, letter from December 15, 1850, quoted in Rosen

- 1998, 52.
21. Baudelaire 1958 (orig. *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 1857)
22. Baudelaire 1958, original lines: *Que tu viennes du ciel ou de l'enfer, qu'importe, / Ô Beauté! monstre énorme, effrayant, ingénu! / Si ton oeil, ton souris, ton pied, m'ouvrent la porte / D'un Infini que j'aime et n'ai jamais connu? // De Satan ou de Dieu, qu'importe? Ange ou Sirène, / Qu'importe, si tu rends, — fée aux yeux de velours, / Rythme, parfum, lueur, ô mon unique reine! — / L'univers moins hideux et les instants moins lourds?* See <http://fleursdumal.org/poem/202> (25-5-2014).
23. Heumakers 2004, 21.
24. Heumakers 2004, 24.
25. Ibid. In the Preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Oscar Wilde explains how the audience validates the work's efficacy, which undermines the aestheticist position of complete, autonomous independency.
- See Jusdanis 2010, 49.
26. Heumakers 2004, 25-26.
27. Schiller 2004 (Or <http://www.gutenberg.org>) (orig. *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*, 1795).
28. Heumakers 2004, 28.
29. Idem, 29.
30. Wellek 1955, 83.
31. Cf. Pyle 2003, 427-459.
32. Colebrook 2004, 90-91.
33. 'Il faut, après tout, que l'art soit son propre but à lui-même, et qu'il enseigne, qu'il moralise, qu'il civilise et qu'il édifie chemin faisant.' Quote in Heumakers 2004, 30.
34. Novalis 1960 ff., 545; Transl. in Richards 2002, 200.
35. Goldstone 2013, 190.
36. Jusdanis 2010, 52-53.
37. Idem, 55.
38. I thank the anonymous peer reviewers of this article for helpful criticism and quite a few suggestions.

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