

PAUL A. KOTTMAN AND MICHAEL SQUIRE (EDS.)

THE ART OF HEGEL'S AESTHETICS

Hegelian Philosophy and the
Perspectives of Art History



MORPHOMATA

This volume explores one of modernity's most profound and far-reaching philosophies of art: the *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, delivered by Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel in the 1820s. The book has two overriding objectives: first, to ask how Hegel's work illuminates specific periods and artworks in light of contemporary art-historical discussions; second, to explore how art history helps us make better sense and use of Hegelian aesthetics.

In bringing together a range of internationally acclaimed critical voices, the volume establishes an important disciplinary bridge between aesthetics and art history. Given the recent resurgence of interest in 'global' art history, and calls for more comparative approaches to 'visual culture', contributors ask what role Hegel has played within the field – and what role he could play in the future. What can a historical treatment of art accomplish? How should we explain the 'need' for certain artistic forms at different historical junctures? Has art history been 'Hegelian' without fully acknowledging it? Indeed, have art historians shirked some of the fundamental questions that Hegel raised?

KOTTMAN, SQUIRE (EDS.) –
THE ART OF HEGEL'S AESTHETICS



MORPHOMATA

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AND DIETRICH BOSCHUNG
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**THE ART OF HEGEL'S
AESTHETICS**

Hegelian Philosophy and the
Perspectives of Art History

WILHELM FINK

GEFÖRDERT VOM



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The origins of this book lie in a series of conversations between the two editors. From October 2014 to March 2015, we both held concurrent fellowships at the Morphomata International Center for Advanced Studies – Genesis, Dynamics and Mediality of Cultural Figurations, University of Cologne: housed in neighbouring apartments (at the university guest-house on Behringstraße), and working in adjacent offices, we began to talk through all aspects of Cologne life. As topics moved from German politics and the looming ‘Brexit’ vote to our own academic work, a shared interest in the history of aesthetics quickly emerged. Fuelled by copious amounts of Earl Grey tea, our talk soon began to home in upon Hegel. Neither of us could claim to have got to grips with all aspects of the *Lectures on Aesthetics*; indeed, it was clear that we had rather different approaches, and not altogether similar assessments of what a ‘Hegelian’ worldview looked like (or for that matter its appeal). We nonetheless shared a fundamental respect for Hegel’s approach: unlike so many modern-day academics, Hegel was able to sieve through the details so as to formulate those all-important, bigger-picture questions.

As our discussions developed – and various points of agreement, discrepancy and confusion crystallised – we began to involve others in our conversations. We soon hit upon the idea of an experimental, international workshop – an occasion to bring together philosophers, art historians and critics. Our plan was always to involve a range of participants, with expertise spanning the entire width and breadth of Hegel’s art historical account. Some of our collaborators would be internationally renowned Hegelian experts; others would be invited precisely because we were unsure about what their contribution would be (and we were curious to find out ...). We attempted to identify speakers from different academic backgrounds and countries; we likewise wanted to strike a balance between established and younger scholars, in the hope that our motley crew would reflect the past, present and future of their disciplines.

The workshop took place at King's College London from 8–10 June 2016, convened under the auspices of the Centre of Hellenic Studies (part of the King's Arts and Humanities Research Institute).¹ Financial support came from a number of different quarters: in addition to seed-funding from King's College London and the New School (the New School for Social Research and Eugene Lang College and the New School for Liberal Arts), we received generous funding from both the Leverhulme Trust and the Morphomata International Center for Advanced Studies. Organisational assistance was likewise offered on both sides of the Channel – above all, from Alex Creighton (in London), and from Thierry Greub and Semra Mägele (in Cologne). It is a pleasure to thank numerous others who also added to the workshop's success: in particular, Ian Jenkins – who, as Senior Curator, organised a special 'Hegelian' tour of the British Museum and a closing reception in the Department of Greece and Rome. We are also grateful to those who introduced, chaired and responded to sessions – Roderick Beaton, Dietrich Boschung, Jaś Elsner, William Fitzgerald, Simon Goldhill, Sacha Golob, Russell Goulbourne, Katharina Lorenz, Sebastian Matzner, Stephen Melville, Jeremy Tanner and Joanna Woodall.

We had little inkling that a conference on 'The Art of Hegel's Aesthetics' would spark the interest that it did. In total, we were able to accommodate up to 150 people within the 'River Room' at King's. But it quickly became apparent that many more wanted to join our conversation: there was a waiting list of almost twice that number, and many other interested scholars contacted us by email.

It was for this reason that we decided to transform the workshop – which was always intended to air ideas and to prompt discussion – into the edited volume at hand. Papers have been lightly revised to fit the published format, but we have tried to keep the informal and experimental thinking that spurred the original gathering. Predictably, the published volume has had to proceed without all the contributors who were originally invited to London: although the final book cannot include their chapters, we much look forward to reading elsewhere the papers by Joshua Billings ('Hegel's tragic poets'), Lydia Goehr ('Monochromy and monotony: On the colour and tone of the absolute in Hegel's Aesthetics'), Ludwig Jäger ('Zeichen/Künste: Der semiologische Subtext der Hegelschen Ästhetik') and Richard Neer ('Hegel and the classical').

¹ For further information – and a hyperlink to a video of the opening session of the workshop – see www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/eventrecords/2015–2016/CHS/hegel.aspx.

We end by adding three additional words of thanks. First and foremost, we are grateful to all the volume's contributors, who engaged with the editors – and most importantly with each other – with such warmth, comradery and enthusiasm. Second, it is a pleasure to thank Dietrich Boschung (co-director of the Morphomata International Center for Advanced Studies), whose support and encouragement have been fundamental throughout. Third and finally, we thank those who helped with the practical production of the volume: Thierry Greub for liaising with the press; Mary Morton, for her assistance with copy-editing; and Kathrin Roussel of Sichtvermerk, for typesetting the volume with characteristic care, patience and attention to detail.

It was never our intention that this project should advance some sort of 'party line', still less that it should aim at offering any 'last word'. Rather, the variety of perspectives reflected in this book – as indeed the range of evaluative responses to Hegelian aesthetics – continues the spirit of our original discussions in Cologne. Whether or not one believes Hegel's dictum that 'art is and remains a thing of the past', we very much hope that our conversations about Hegelian aesthetics will stretch long into the future.

Michael Squire (London)
& Paul A. Kottman (New York)

NOTE ON EDITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

One of the difficulties in working on the text of Hegel's aesthetics is that there is in fact no 'text' to speak of. The *Lectures on Aesthetics* – or *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* – were never published during Hegel's lifetime.¹ Hegel did commit part of his thinking about the history of aesthetics to print (above all, in sections 556–563 of his 1830 *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*). Other than that, however, Hegel privileged an oral medium, delivering a series of lectures first at Heidelberg (in 1818), and subsequently in Berlin (during the winter semesters of 1820–1821 and 1828–1829, and during the summer semesters of 1823 and 1826).

While there is no published treatise with which to engage head on, we do have a curious synthesis of notes. Foremost among these is the 'version' of the lectures put together by one of Hegel's Berlin students, Heinrich Gustav Hotho. Hotho's version is purportedly based, at least in part, on Hegel's own manuscripts, which are long since lost. But they also certainly include a degree of elaboration and embellishment, which at times seems to derive more from Hotho than from Hegel. Hotho in fact published two versions of the *Vorlesungen*, first in 1835 (in three volumes of Hegel's collected works, following the author's death in 1831), and again in 1842, based on the lectures of 1823, 1826 and 1828–1829.

For this reason, contributors to this volume refer to a number of different critical editions of Hegel's works. Since this volume has been published in English, and contributors aim to address broader evaluative questions rather than specific points about transmission or history, our foremost reference is to the English translation by T.M. Knox, published in two volumes: *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975; reissued in paperback by Oxford University Press, 1988). In referring to the German text, most contributors have privileged the handy Suhrkamp edition by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, which has itself gone through various editions: the most recent is the twelfth edition, available in three volumes (*Werke* vols. 13–15) – *G.W.F. Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2013).

¹ On the title, see Squire's introduction to this volume, pp. 23–24, n. 1.

Some contributors have thought it important to refer to a larger range of specialist critical editions and commentaries (often using the standard abbreviations when referring to these versions). Of these, the most important are the following:

- PK** A Gethmann-Siefert, J.-I. Kwon and K. Berr (eds.) (2004) *Philosophie der Kunst. Vorlesung von 1826*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- PKÄ** A. Gethmann-Siefert and B. Collenberg-Plotnikov (eds.) (2004) *Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik. Nach Hegel. Im Sommer 1826. Mitschrift Friedrich Carl Hermann Victor von Kehler*, Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.
- VÄ** H. Schneider (ed.) (1995) *Vorlesung über Ästhetik. Berlin 1820/21. Eine Nachschrift*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- VPK** A. Gethmann-Siefert (ed.) (2003) *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.
- VPKN** N. Hebing (ed.) (2015) *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I. Nachschriften zu den Kollegien der Jahre 1820/21 und 1823*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.

Most of these versions are available only in German, with the exception of a recent translation of *VPK* by R.F. Brown: *G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Art: The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2014).²

Contributors also refer at times to the series of Hegel's collected works, as published in German:

- (1968-)** *Gesammelte Werke* (Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften). Hamburg: Felix Meiner.
- (1983-)** *Vorlesungen: Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte* (Members of the Hegel-Archiv). Hamburg: Felix Meiner.
- (1969-)** E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel (eds.) *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- (1999)** *Hauptwerke in sechs Bänden, Bd. III, Die Wissenschaft der Logik, Zweites Buch. Die Lehre vom Wesen*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner.

² For a detailed discussion of the transmission problems in English, see Anne-Marie Gethmann-Siefert's opening chapter, 'Introduction: the shape and influence of Hegel's aesthetics', at 7–176, esp. 30–66 (on 'The sources for Hegel's aesthetics').

While contributors have likewise at times turned to additional editions, they were requested to make particular use of the following English translations of some of Hegel's other key works:

- (1948) *Early Theological Writings*, ed. R. Kroner, trans. T.M. Knox. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (1971) *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind, Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), trans. W. Wallace, together with the *Zusätze* in Boumann's text (1845), trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- (1975) *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction: Reason in History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1977) *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (1978) *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* (3 vols.), ed. M.J. Petry. Dordrecht: Springer.
- (1983) *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805–1806)*, ed. and trans. L. Rauch. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- (1984) *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. C. Butler and C. Seiler. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
- (1985) *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. C. Butler and C. Seiler. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
- (1991) *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. A. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1993) *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. B. Bosanquet, ed. M.J. Inwood. London: Penguin.
- (2002) *The Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. J. Stewart. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press.
- (2007) *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A.V. Miller, rev. M.J. Inwood. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- (2010) *The Science of Logic*, trans. G. Di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (2011) *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, ed. and trans. R. Brown and P. Hodgson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (2013) *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. T. Pinkard. Available at www.academia.edu/16699140/Translation_of_Phenomenology_of_Spirit.

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MICHAEL SQUIRE

INTRODUCTION

Hegel and art history

... unsere Betrachtung ... hatte kein anderes Ziel, als den Grundbegriff des Schönen und der Kunst durch alle Stadien hindurch, die er in seiner Realisation durchläuft, zu verfolgen und durch das Denken faßbar zu machen und zu bewähren.

My one aim has been to seize in thought and to prove the fundamental nature of the beautiful and art, and to follow it through all the stages it has gone through in the course of its realization.

Hegel 2013, III: 573 = Hegel 1975, 1237

Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel was arguably the most cross-disciplinary thinker to have emerged from modern western academe [Fig. 1.1]. Long before ‘interdisciplinarity’ became a buzzword for project-proposals and grant applications – or indeed edited books like the one in hand – Hegel’s *Lectures on Aesthetics* provided a paradigm for bringing together different modes of critical, historical and intellectual enquiry.¹ In a formal

1 Throughout this introduction I refer principally to T.M. Knox’s English translation of Hegel’s lectures (Hegel 1975) – based on the second, 1842 edition by H.G. Hotho; where relevant, I also quote the handy Suhrkamp German edition, based on the same Hotho version (Hegel 2013). The decision to refer to Hegel’s *Lectures on Aesthetics* rather than e.g. *Lectures on Fine Art* (the preferred English title of Hegel 1975) is deliberate – both in this introduction, and in the title of our book. Some contributors prefer other names, noting Hegel’s own dissatisfaction with the delineation of ‘aesthetics’ (cf. Hegel 1975, 1). Still, Hegel declares that the name ‘*Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*’ can stand (‘daß er

sense, Hegel designed his *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* as lessons in Idealist philosophy, complete with detailed ripostes to Enlightenment predecessors and contemporary rivals. At the same time, his approach to aesthetics forms a bridge with his critical study of religion – within a series of lectures that have almost as much to offer theologians as they do philosophers.² No less importantly, Hegel also throws the study of art, in all its forms, into the mix, centring his discussion around the visual arts (including architecture, sculpture and painting), as well as music, poetry and other kinds of literary and theatrical composition.³ As a result, the *Lectures* address almost every department within the ‘arts and humanities’: if Hegel has something to offer individual specialists, he has still more to offer those committed to traversing disciplinary fault-lines.

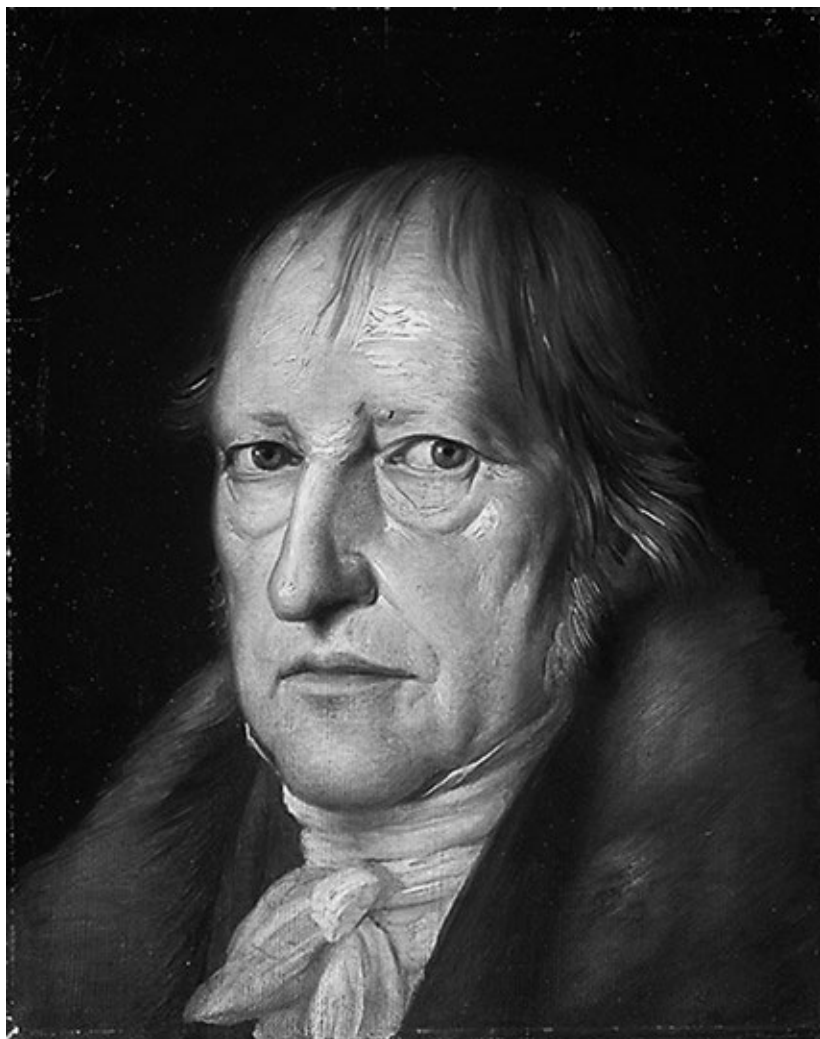
Hegel’s intellectual ambition does not just pertain to his dizzying array of academic subjects. From a personal perspective, as someone raised in the disciplinary paradigms of classics, what first attracted me to Hegel was his willingness to step out beyond the historical study of the past to reflections about the present and future – his insight that studying the past necessarily coalesces with our thinking about the present, and vice versa. Hegel often homes in on small visual details:⁴ skilled in the art of

als Name kann beibehalten werden’), even though the ‘proper expression for our science is Philosophy of Art, and more definitely, “Philosophy of Fine Art”’ (*Der eigentlich Ausdruck jedoch für unsere Wissenschaft ist ‘Philosophie der Kunst’ und bestimmter ‘Philosophie der schönen Künste’*). While Hegel associates ‘aesthetics’ with the ‘science of sensation, of feeling’ – that is, with something distinct from the project at hand – the lectures do likewise incorporate important analyses of sensory perception along the way (cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 38–39, 621–623).

2 For some stimulating recent comments on these interconnections, see the contributions to Braune-Krickau, Erne and Scholl 2014. Within an art historical context, Hegel’s chief contribution lies in bringing together the study of theology and art; in this sense, he played a critical role in founding what today has been called ‘visual theology’, whereby ‘the act of looking itself contributes to religious formation and, indeed, constitutes a powerful practice of belief’ (Morgan 1998, 3; cf. also Morgan 2000). Thiessen 2005 provides a useful guide to ‘theological aesthetics’ within Christian intellectual traditions (with Hegel featuring on 190–196), while Brent Plate 2002 offers a stimulating cross-cultural reader.

3 Hegel also touches upon other kinds of art: although dance is not systematically treated, for example, there are passing references at e.g. Hegel 1975, 352–353, 627–628, 1039, 1186–1187.

4 By this, I mean – as T.J. Clark nicely put it in one of his interventions during our London workshop – that Hegel is the most materialist of the Idealists, and



1.1 Jakob Schlesinger, *Portrait of Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel*, 1831 (36.0 × 28.5 cm). Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, inv. A I556. Photograph by Michael Squire.

looking,⁵ he makes stimulating (and often deeply persuasive) observations about specific case studies. For all Hegel's philosophical concerns, artworks themselves likewise take centre-stage: art is not approached as a mirror for social-historical realities, but as a matrix through which those realities are established.⁶ Crucially, the *Lectures on Aesthetics* also dare to zoom out from that microscale. Hegel saw the question of theorising what art *is* as inseparable from understanding what it *has been*, and vice versa. Rather than tender an overriding theory of aesthetic judgment, he consequently offered a systematic treatment of art as historical practice: the *Lectures* devise a grand narrative of art that takes in the whole history of human self-understanding.⁷

The *Lectures on Aesthetics* have not always received the attention they deserve. Until quite recently, the work attracted relatively little scholarly interest – at least when compared with other Hegelian treatises (above all, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*).⁸ Here in Britain, Hegel has likewise established

hence particularly worth reading for art historians: cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 21–22, defining Idealism *against* the legacy of Platonic philosophy. Adorno 1977, 334, famously said that 'Hegel and Kant were able to write major aesthetics without understanding anything about art'. While 'this may or may not be true of Kant', as the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on Hegel (by Stephen Houlgate) concludes, 'it is clearly quite untrue of Hegel: he had an extensive knowledge and a good understanding of many of the great works of art in the Western tradition. Nor was Hegel's knowledge and interest restricted to Western art ...' (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel-aesthetics/>); cf. below, pp. 48–50.

5 At least, one might add, when it comes to painting. 'In order to discuss the details of a branch of art, a man must have seen a great deal, a very great deal, and seen it again [*man muß vieles, sehr vieles gesehen und wiedergesehen haben*]' as Hegel puts it (Hegel 1975, 629 = 2013, II: 264): 'I have seen a considerable amount, but not all that would be necessary for treating this subject in full detail'; cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 169–171, 797–887. For Hegel's thinking about the importance of autopsy in the field of painting, cf. below, n. 112.

6 I take my phrasing here from Kottman 2017, 16: 'Art is not the passive mirror for already established sociohistorical realities, but a fundamental matrix through which social reality is established, brought into being.'

7 On the Enlightenment thinking behind such 'grand narratives' – and its fundamental remove from the '(post-)modern condition' at the end of the twentieth century – the classic discussion is Lyotard 1979.

8 Important early Anglophone studies include Bungay 1984, Henrich 1985 and Desmond 1986; in German, cf. especially Koespel 1975 – dedicated to the reception of Hegel's aesthetics in the twentieth century – alongside the numerous

himself as the ultimate ‘Marmite’ philosopher, soliciting equally polarised responses from disciples and doubters alike: his *Lectures* have certainly attracted a small but devoted clique of proselytes (and Hegelian circles *can* have something of a sect about them ...); at the same time, they have yielded an even more vociferous clan of critics, above all among those who (rightly or wrongly) judge a ‘Hegelian’ worldview to smack of totalitarianism – and as anathema to a liberal ideology of multicultural relativism.⁹

Love him or loathe him, Hegel can help us to articulate some of the most pressing questions within the critical study of art. As interlocutor, Hegel goads us into looking beyond our individual areas of expertise; he invites us to think bigger, to move beyond the strictures and confines of disciplines and engage with a broader spectrum of critical issues. Whether they persuade, incense, challenge or cajole, the *Lectures on Aesthetics* open up new types of conversation: they get us *talking* with one another, and in ways still all too rare within the twenty-first-century university.

The aim of this book is to foster such conversations, above all by putting Hegel’s philosophy of art across time and place into renewed dialogue with the field of art history (broadly defined). In calling upon a range of philosophers on the one hand, and of art historians with expertise in the various periods that Hegel discussed on the other, our overriding objective is twofold: first, to ask how Hegel’s work might illuminate specific periods and artworks in relation to contemporary art historical discussions; and second, to explore how disciplinary art historical perspectives might help us to better make sense (and use) of Hegel’s critical remarks in the *Lectures*.

With the recent rise of ‘global’ art history, and the calls for more comparative approaches to ‘visual culture’,¹⁰ contributors have set out to explore

pioneering contributions of Annemarie Gethmann Siefert. There has been a renaissance of Hegelian aesthetics in recent years, above all in North America and Britain: this is reflected in the work of (among others) Jay Bernstein, Lydia Goehr, Gregg Horowitz, Stephen Houlgate, Angelica Nuzzo, Terry Pinkard, Robert Pippin and Benjamin Rutter. Within the field of art history, numerous figures (like Theodor Adorno, T.J. Clark, Arthur Danto, Michael Fried and Jason Gaiger) have likewise drawn on aspects of the Hegelian account; indeed, in the analysis of modern and contemporary art in particular, the *Lectures* have become a touchstone for contemporary theoretical discussions (cf. below, pp. 43–44).

⁹ Cf. below, pp. 48–50, as well as Davis’ chapter in this book, with Kottman’s envoi. Once again, the underlying issue lies in (post-)modern resistance to the *grands récits* so in vogue during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (cf. Lyotard 1979).

¹⁰ Cf. below, pp. 50–51.

the role that Hegel has played – and *could* play – within the field of art history. An array of questions ensue. What do we mean by ‘art’? What does art make known, and how does it do so? How might artworks, existing in the present, help us to think about the past – to tackle ‘history’, no less than ‘historicism’ and ‘historicity’? In what ways might art help to make sense of past phenomena that would otherwise remain unknown to us? By extension, what exactly might a historical treatment of art accomplish? How should we explain the ‘need’ for certain artistic forms and practices at different historical junctures? Can we devise a cross-cultural account for grasping the rise and fall of certain artistic practices over time and place? Has art history been ‘Hegelian’ without fully acknowledging the fact – and, conversely, in what ways might the discipline be thought to have shirked the questions that Hegel raised? While the chapters that follow offer varying responses to these and other issues, contributors share a conviction that Hegel can help us to formulate positions – and in a host of radical and urgent ways.

The institutional collaboration behind our project is no less important. Each chapter in this book was first aired during a workshop at King’s College London in June 2016, organised by the Arts and Humanities Research Institute (AHRI): the event was sponsored by the Centre of Hellenic Studies at King’s (appropriately enough, given the pivotal role of Greek art in Hegel’s account);¹¹ at the same time, the conference brought together the various departments within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities – in keeping with the AHRI’s aim ‘of fostering innovative interdisciplinary research’.¹² Just as our project worked across academic subjects, so too did it seek to combine international perspectives. Right from the outset, King’s paired up with the New School in New York – above all, with the Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, which likewise champions cross-disciplinary relationships, with a view to social justice and reform.¹³ The third partner in our triumvirate was the Morphomata International Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Cologne – one of the Käte Hamburger Kollegs (‘Centres for Global Cooperation Research’) established by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research in 2008. Hegel’s transhistorical, transcultural and transmedial approach speaks directly to the research agenda of the Morphomata International Center for Advanced Studies, above all its concern with the

11 Cf. above all the chapters in this book by Peters and Squire.

12 On the AHRI, see www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/ahri/index.aspx.

13 Cf. www.newschool.edu/lang/.

‘Genese, Dynamik und Medialität kultureller Figurationen’.¹⁴ More generally, though, our questions take up the invitation of the Käte Hamburger initiative, which offers ‘Freiraum für Geisteswissenschaften’ (‘freedom for research in the humanities’). This book is founded on that promise of ‘free space’, of providing a forum for thinking across disciplinary boundaries. Yet it also sets out to probe that very denomination of *Geisteswissenschaften* in the first place: to interrogate, through engagement with Hegel, this notion of ‘spirit’ or *Geist* that – like it or not – lurks behind the humanities.

APPROACHING THE AESTHETICS

Before elaborating on the structure of the book, it is perhaps worth pausing to say something about the *Lectures on Aesthetics* themselves, as well as their art historical reception.¹⁵ The ‘text’ of these lectures dates to a series of orations first delivered at the University of Heidelberg in the summer of 1818. Hegel moved to Berlin at the age of 48, taking up the Chair at the city’s newly established university (founded by Friedrich Wilhelm III in 1809). During his time in Berlin, Hegel repeated and elaborated upon those Heidelberg lectures on four subsequent occasions (during the winter semesters of 1820–1821 and 1828–1829, and the summer semesters of 1823 and 1826). Yet to talk of a ‘text’ here would be misleading. As we explain in our introductory ‘Note on editions’ (pp. 10–12), Hegel devised his lectures for oral delivery, and their precise form is a subject of lively scholarly debate.¹⁶ The point demands emphasis from the outset: part of

14 For an introduction to the intellectual framework of the Morphomata International Center for Advanced Studies – and its definitions of the ‘genesis, dynamics and mediality of cultural figurations’ – see the essays in Blamberger and Boschung 2011.

15 There are of course countless guides to Hegel’s aesthetics, and their place within the larger Hegelian corpus. I do not intend to survey the full bibliography here, since particular contributions are assessed in the chapters that follow. Suffice to say that my own thinking has learned from the following in particular: Knox 1978, 79–122; Bungay 1984; Ferry 1993, 114–147; Wicks 1993; Houlgate 1997; Wyss 1999, esp. 100–171; Besançon 2000, 203–221; Maker 2000; Franke and Gethmann-Siefert 2005; Hendrix 2005, 163–256; Pippin 2005, 279–306; Houlgate 2007; Nagl-Docekal, Rózsa and Gethmann-Siefert 2013; Arndt, Kruck and Zovko 2014; Pippin 2014; Peters 2015.

16 In addition to pp. 10–12 above, see the detailed English introduction by Gethmann-Siefert in Hegel 2014 (esp. 1–4), along with e.g. Gaiger 2006b,

the vibrant appeal of this ‘treatise’ resides in its perpetual state of being unfinished – its spur for students (which is to say now modern scholars) to ask questions, to run with arguments and to cut our critical teeth in resisting, rethinking and revising aspects of the professor’s thinking.

What, then, do the *Lectures* argue? Restrictions of space mean that I can offer only a rudimentary sketch here.¹⁷ But since the chapters that follow often delve into the nitty-gritty, it seems worth outlining some of the preliminary principles.

Perhaps the first thing to note is that, for Hegel, the history of art fits into a larger project of Idealist philosophy, centred around freedom, reason and self-consciousness (the beating heart of Idealism – associated with *die Idee*).¹⁸ Unlike Kant, whose foremost concern was the aesthetics of experiencing nature (which only ever amounted to a subsidiary interest) rather than a systematic approach to human artworks,¹⁹ Hegel ascribed to art a significance all of its own: what is important about ‘art’ [*Kunst*] is its function of making known, through material form, the workings of ‘spirit’ [*Geist*];²⁰ ‘art has no other mission but to bring before sensuous contemplation the truth as it is in the spirit, reconciled in its totality with objectivity and the sphere of sense’.²¹

161–164 and Rutter 2010. On Heinrich Gustav Hotho – and his key role in determining the posthumous argumentative fabric of the *Lectures* – cf. Ziemer 1993. **17** For my own earlier attempt at a summary, see Squire 2012. Wicks 1993 still provides a readable introductory overview.

18 Cf. Hegel 1975, esp. 1–90. Hegel’s approach to the philosophy of art forms part of his philosophy (rather than phenomenology) of spirit; the relationship between Hegel’s system of logic, philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit is set out in his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, published in three editions during Hegel’s lifetime – in 1817, 1827 and 1830). For some introductions to the various strains of Hegelian thinking – and the place of his philosophy of art within his philosophy of absolute spirit – see e.g. Rockmore 1993, Beiser 2008, Nuzzo 2006 and Houlgate and Baur 2011.

19 Cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 116–152.

20 Cf. especially Hegel 1975, 12: ‘Now art and works of art, by springing forth and being created by the spirit, are themselves of a spiritual kind, even if their presentation assumes an appearance of sensuousness and pervades the sensuous with the spirit’; compare also *ibid.*, 32–41. The thinking is reflected in Hegel’s formulation – in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* – that ‘spirit is artist’ (*Der Geist ist Künstler*: Hegel 1988, 458).

21 Hegel 1975, 623.

Approached from this perspective, the revelations of art are related to those of religion and philosophy.²² Like those other two spheres, art gives expressive form to the spirit's quest for self-understanding. But where philosophy makes things known through concepts, and religion operates through the figurative imagery of beliefs, art takes on sensuous form: its purpose is to reveal to us aspects of ourselves – the work of art is the 'spirit appearing in the sensuous' [*der Geist im Sinnlichen erscheinend*],²³ and artistic beauty 'the sensible shining forth of the *Idee* [*das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee*].'²⁴

It is this approach to *Kunst* that lends the history of art its critical significance. Where Kant had endeavoured to outline the principles governing timeless and universal aesthetic experience, centred around a shared aesthetic imperative of 'disinterest', Hegel advances a different thesis:²⁵ namely, that 'every work of art belongs to its own time, its own people, its own environment, and depends on particular historical and other ideas and purposes'.²⁶ To study the history of art, it follows, is to unlock the course of human self-discovery.²⁷

22 Cf. Hegel 1975, esp. 101–105. The complaint of Eagleton 1990, 143 – namely, that art occupies 'a lowly rung on the ontological ladder, below religion and philosophy' – strikes me as overly simplistic.

23 Hegel 1975, 621.

24 Hegel 2013, I: 151 (Knox translates the phrase as follows [Hegel 1975, 111]: 'Therefore the beautiful is characterized as the pure appearance of the Idea to sense'). Admittedly, as Gaiger 2006b, 163 reminds us, this particular 'description of art ... is nowhere to be found in any of the surviving sets of notes' – and may well be one of Hotho's interventions; still, it does relate closely to various passages in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

25 On Hegel's relationship to Kant – and the Romantic philosophical tradition at large – see Gardner's chapter in this volume: among the most important passages responding to the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* are Hegel 1975, 56–61, 362–363; key modern discussions include Guyer 1990, D'Oro 1996 and Ameriks 2002. Kant's ultimate legacy, of course, lies in Hegel's abiding concern with freedom or *Freiheit* – albeit now shifted from Kantian ideas of the free play of subjective experience to the 'freedom of spirit' (cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 97, 438).

26 Hegel 1975, 14. It is for this reason, Hegel continues, that 'scholarship in the field of art demands a vast wealth of historical, and indeed very detailed, facts, since the individual nature of the work of art is related to something individual and necessarily requires detailed knowledge for its understanding and explanation.' For further explication, cf. *ibid.*, 25–55.

27 Hegel 1975, 7.

In works of art the nations have deposited their richest inner institutions and ideas, and art is often the key, and in many nations the sole key, to understanding their philosophy and religion.

The importance of art, in other words, lies in what it reveals about humanity's spiritual history, its *Geistesgeschichte*.

This helps to explain the particular challenge that Hegel set himself in his *Lectures*. By surveying the history of artistic production – across cultures, across the variables of time and space, and not least across different forms – Hegel sought to uncover *what* art has made known, and the various ways in which it has done so. There were of course precedents to the project. Among other forebears, one might think of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, in particular his 1764 *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (a text to which Hegel frequently alluded).²⁸ Writing a half-century or so earlier, Winckelmann had pivoted his discussion around 'antiquity'.²⁹ In stark contrast, Hegel casts a wider net: the *Lectures* extend from furthest antiquity right up to Hegel's own time, as indeed back again.³⁰

28 Cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 19, 63, 160–161, 172, 723–724, 733–737 (as indeed throughout his discussion of sculpture in the third part of the *Lectures*: *ibid.*, 701–791). 'Amongst those with this knowledge [of the sculptural ideal in Greek sculpture] and with an insight into Greek art and a burning love of it, it is Winckelmann above all who with the enthusiasm of his reproductive insight no less than with intelligence and sound judgment put an end to vague chatter about the ideal of Greek beauty by characterizing individually and with precision the forms of the parts [of Greek sculpture] – the sole undertaking that was instructive' (*ibid.*, 723). This is the reason why, when it comes to 'particular aspects of the ideal form in sculpture', Hegel promises to 'follow Winckelmann in the main' (*ibid.*, 727); cf. also Peters' chapter in this volume, pp. 117–120.

29 This is not to deny, however, the essential parallels that Winckelmann draws between the four-stage history of 'modern' and 'ancient' Greek art: cf. Squire 2011, 50–53.

30 Cf. Prettejohn 2012, 104–105, adding that by diverting 'the historical study of art from its exclusive focus, in Winckelmann, on classical antiquity', Hegel also 'set up the terms for the modernist rejection of classicism as a universal principle of art'. While Hegel draws heavily on Winckelmann's discussion of Greek sculpture (often with reference to its subsequent German reception), he takes from the *Geschichte* the idea of art's organic development: cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 614: 'For the products of all the arts are works of the spirit and therefore are not, like natural productions, complete all at once within their specific sphere; on the contrary, they have a beginning, a progress, a perfection, and an

In terms of structure, Hegel seems to have organised his *Lectures* in three interconnecting parts.³¹ After a general introduction,³² the first section addressed the issue of ‘beauty’ and the ideals of art.³³ This gave rise, in the second part, to an exploration of the different forms of art, above all in historical perspective.³⁴ The third section – at once the longest and most challenging – is structured around particular media: architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry in different genres.³⁵ Two particular ideas prove crucial throughout. First, as we have said, Hegel understood the development of art as inextricable from the larger development of human self-understanding. Second, Hegel viewed that development as progressive: when it comes to the history of art, as indeed to history at large (a thesis championed in his Berlin lectures on the *Philosophy of History*), the narrative is one of unfolding, forward-moving advancement. Precisely how ‘linear’ we should judge this advancement remains moot: the third section, on the ‘System of the individual arts’, rather complicates the suggestion of any straightforward development over time.³⁶ Still, the *Lectures* certainly do champion the idea that patterns of development can only be understood in retrospect: if the history of art must always be assessed from a situated perspective, the modern western viewpoint onto

end, a growth, blossoming, and decay.’ The fundamental difference, however, is that Winckelmann’s *Geschichte* is premised on the idea of a modernist German rekindling of art, whereas Hegel concerns himself with explaining its ‘pastness’.

31 For an outline of the structure and argument, see Hegel 1975, 69–90. Cf. also the repetitions about organisational outline – no doubt conceived with a view to the student audience – at e.g. *ibid.*, 299–302, 613–614.

32 Hegel 1975, 1–90.

33 Hegel 1975: 91–298.

34 Hegel 1975, 299–611.

35 Hegel 1975, 613–1237.

36 For Hegel’s attempt to reconcile the second and third parts of the *Lectures*, see especially Hegel 1975, 614: ‘Now, just as the particular art-forms, taken as a group, have in them a progress, a development from the symbolic into the classical and then the romantic, so on the one hand we find in the individual arts also a similar progress because it is precisely the art-forms themselves which acquire their determinate existence through the individual arts. Yet, on the other hand, the individual arts too, independently of the art-forms which they objectify, have in themselves a development, a course which, considered rather abstractly, is common to them all. Each art has its time of efflorescence, of its perfect development as an art, and a history preceding and following this moment of perfection ...’ Cf. below, n. 67.

that history stands at the most advanced stage, and is more developed than any other.

The point takes us back to the relationship between Hegel's histories of art, religion and philosophy. For Hegel, one of the things that art makes known is mankind's understanding of itself – no less than of the world in which mankind finds itself. In this sense, the history of art is a history of expressing the supersensory in sensory form,³⁷ since a primary purpose of art is its need 'above all to make the Divine the centre of its representations'.³⁸

From the outset, however, Hegel posits a rupture between modern western modalities, as made known through art, and those of earlier times and places. Rather than demand worship, art today solicits a different sort of appreciation and response:³⁹

No matter how excellent we find the statues of the Greek gods, no matter how we see God the Father, Christ, and Mary so estimably and perfectly portrayed: it is no help; we bow the knee no longer.

By looking back from our modern-day vantage-point, we can see a break with past attitudes. 'Transferred into our *ideas* instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place', art 'considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past'.⁴⁰ So how is it, Hegel asks, that we have ended up in this situation? How has the historical development of art made known this critical self-understanding? Likewise, how might our present viewpoint shed light on art's past – and its 'pastness'?

It is these questions that led Hegel, from the position of hindsight, at once to narrate and explain the history of art, and from the distant past right up to the present day. Our modern condition, according to Hegel, relates to a tripartite history of artistic progress, one that moves from 'symbolic', through 'classical', and on to 'romantic' forms of art

37 As Besançon 2000, 224, summarises the Hegelian argument, 'the history of God can be grasped only through the history of art, at least until the point when God disappeared and dragged art along with him'.

38 Hegel 1975, 175; cf. *ibid.*, 83. For Hegel, the point is crucial for distinguishing between works of art and nature (*ibid.*, esp. 29–30, and above, pp. 30–31).

39 Hegel 1975, 103; cf. Squire's chapter in this volume.

40 Hegel 1975, 11. Cf. below, pp. 38–43.

[*Kunstformen*].⁴¹ The chapters that follow have more to say about these three ‘stages’, and their various configurations of external sensuous ‘form’ and inner ‘content’.⁴² For now, though, a brief overview can suffice.

For Hegel, art’s first – symbolic – stage failed to achieve genuine beauty, leading him to associate it with what he labels ‘pre-art’, or *Vorkunst*.⁴³ In discussing the symbolic, Hegel introduced various cultural and religious perspectives – among them, Persian and Zoroastrian, Indian (which is to say, for Hegel, Hindu), Egyptian, Judaic and Islamic.⁴⁴ While of course disparate in appearance, these forms all share a vague and abstract grasp of their subjects, which explains their sensuous deficiencies.⁴⁵ Egyptian art offers the clearest example of what Hegel meant by his ‘symbolic’ nomenclature. In the case of imagery (as for that matter hieroglyphic writing) from Egypt,⁴⁶ the relationship between form and content – between sensuous appearance and the concepts that they represent – is arbitrary: while Egyptian images certainly do attempt a disclosure, they only ever point to – they only ever *symbolise* – something, so that the thing symbolised remains forever occluded from view.⁴⁷ Hegel’s classic example is

41 For a summary, cf. Hegel 1975, 299–302, along with e.g. *ibid.*, 75–81. Pinkard 2007 offers one of the best recent discussions.

42 Cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 70: ‘... the content of art is the Idea, while its form is the configuration of sensuous material’: for further comments, compare the chapters by Davis, Peters, Squire and Pippin in this volume.

43 Cf. Hegel 1975, 303–426. In symbolic art-forms, it is argued (*ibid.*, 74), the defectiveness of form stems from a defectiveness of content: ‘the Chinese, Indians and Egyptians, in their artistic shapes, images of gods, and idols, never get beyond formlessness or a bad and untrue definiteness of form’; ‘they could not master true beauty because their mythological ideas, the content and thought of their works of art, were still indeterminate, or determined badly, and so did not consist of the content which is absolute in itself’; cf. also *ibid.*, 76–77.

44 On the relationship, see Hegel 1975, 319–321; cf. below, pp. 48–50.

45 As Hammermeister 2002, 98, puts it, the symbolic ‘is a sublime expression of man’s search for meaning, yet it does not move beyond a manifestation of the insufficient and vague idea in inadequate forms’. For a provocative challenge to Hegel’s thinking here, see Davis’ chapter in this volume.

46 For the parallels between Egyptian art and hieroglyphic script, see Hegel 1975, 357.

47 Cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 360: ‘The works of Egyptian art in their mysterious symbolism are therefore riddles; the objective riddle *par excellence*’ [*Die Werke der ägyptischen Kunst in ihrer geheimnisvollen Symbolik sind deshalb Rätsel, das objective Rätsel selbst* = Hegel 2013, I: 465]. In this connection, Hegel introduces

the pyramid, designed to contain the body of the dead (that is, something that signals mortality, absence, an empty *negation* of spiritual life): the pyramid gives sensuous form to a realm of interiority that it has yet to understand; as (pre-)artistic form, it has failed to grasp the true inwardness of human spirit.⁴⁸

The second, 'classical' stage – associated with Greek antiquity – offers the decisive advancement.⁴⁹ Unlike the symbolic, classical art achieves true beauty: it gives perfect sensuous expression to a new conception of divinity, and hence to the spiritual freedom that Greek religion enshrines.⁵⁰ Through the very beauty of those forms, Greek art nonetheless comes to make known a deficiency in spiritual self-understanding. The more perfectly ancient sculptors attempted to embody the spiritual life of the gods in the human form of their statues, the more they revealed it to lie beyond bodily, sensuous expression.⁵¹

the literal riddle posed by the theriomorphic figure of the sphinx in Greek myth: the Greeks offered the decisive solution to the problems of both Egyptian religion and art, Hegel argues, and with an answer that is (revealingly!) oriented around both the human and the humanistic.

48 Cf. Hegel 1975, 356: 'The Pyramids are such an external environment in which an inner meaning rests concealed'; as a result, 'the Pyramids put before our eyes the simple prototype of symbolical art itself'. Hegel returns to the Pyramids in his subsequent discussion of architecture at 651–654: 'though astonishing in themselves', it is argued, they 'are just simple crystals, shells enclosing a kernel, a departed spirit, and serve to preserve its enduring body and form' (653).

49 Hegel 1975, 427–516.

50 Cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 77: 'The classical art-form clears up this double defect [of symbolic forms]; it is the free and adequate embodiment of the Idea in the shape peculiarly appropriate to the Idea itself in its essential nature. With this shape, therefore, the Idea is able to come into free and complete harmony. Thus the classical art-form is the first to afford the production and vision of the completed Ideal and to present it as actualized in fact.'

51 Hegel 1975, 502–16, with summary at e.g. *ibid.*, 78–9. For Hegel, the limits of classical art are clearly bound up with the spiritual finitudes of anthropomorphism itself: the visualised human forms 'pervert the gods into the reverse of what constitutes the essence of the substantial and Divine'; as a result, 'the downfall of these beautiful gods of art is therefore necessitated purely by their own nature, since in the end the mind cannot any longer find rest in them and therefore turns back from them into itself' (*ibid.*, 504). Here, as throughout Hegel's treatment of art history, it is the very configuration of the art-form that contains within it the seeds of its dissolution.

A certain ‘melancholy’ ensued: ‘the blessed gods mourn as it were over the blessedness of their bodily form’; ‘we read in their faces the fate that awaits them, and its development, as the actual emergence of that contradiction between loftiness and particularity, between spirituality and sensuous existence, drags classical art itself to its ruin’.⁵²

This ‘ruin’ gave rise to a new religion – Christianity – and to a third, ‘romantic’ form of art, associated with the rise of western Christendom.⁵³ Whereas the classical gods were ‘sightless’, because the ‘light of the soul falls outside them and belongs to the spectator alone’, the ‘God of romantic art appears seeing, self-knowing, inwardly subjective, and disclosing his inner being to man’s inner being’.⁵⁴ The Christian Incarnation proves crucial to both romantic art and religion alike.⁵⁵ Just as the Incarnation is premised upon a new relationship between God and humanity, art makes known the disjuncture between the material and spiritual realms: where the classical had concerned itself with the perfection of outward form, art now points to something wholly more subjective, a ‘beauty of inwardness’ [*Schönheit der Innigkeit*].⁵⁶ Unlike symbolic art,⁵⁷ romantic art

52 Hegel 1975, 485. The previous sentence is important: ‘the more that seriousness and spiritual freedom appear in the shapes of the gods, so much the more can we feel a contrast between (a) this loftiness and (b) determinacy and bodily form’. Cf. also *ibid.*, 817: ‘The gods of the classical ideal too do not lack a trait of mourning, of a fateful negative [*an dem schicksalsvollen Negativen*: Hegel 2013, III: 42], present in the cold necessity imprinted on these serene figures ...’

53 Hegel 1975, 517–611.

54 Hegel 1975, 521.

55 To put the point more strongly, one might say that the fate of romantic art follows the spiritual paradigm of Christ Himself (cf. Hegel 1975, 505–506, 537–539): ‘This history of the spirit, consummated in one individual, contains nothing except what we have already touched on above, namely that the individual man casts aside his individuality of body and spirit, i.e. that he suffers and dies, but conversely through the grief of death rises out of death, and ascends as God in his glory, as the actual spirit which now has indeed entered existence as an individual, as this subject, yet even so is essentially truly God only as Spirit in his Church’ (*ibid.*, 534–535).

56 Hegel 1975, 531; cf. *ibid.*, 79–81, 518–519. On Hegel’s thinking here, see especially Pippin’s chapter in this volume, developing aspects of Pippin 2014.

57 For the distinction, see e.g. Hegel 1975, 81: ‘Thereby the separation of Idea and shape, their indifference and inadequacy to each other, come to the fore again, as in symbolic art, but with this essential difference, that, in romantic art, the Idea, the deficiency of which in the symbol brought with it deficiency of shape, now has to appear *perfected* in itself as spirit and heart.’

discloses rather than symbolises. But the spiritual truth that it reveals transcends the sensuous realm of art. It is for this reason that Hegel posits the Reformation as the defining culmination of both Christianity and romantic art: ‘when the urge for knowledge and research, and the need for inner spirituality, instigated the Reformation, religious ideas were drawn away from their wrapping in the element of sense and brought back to the inwardness of heart and thinking’.⁵⁸

To my eyes, the painting that gives clearest visual form to Hegel’s thinking about the romantic *Kunstform* is a ceiling-fresco by Tomasso Laureti in the mid-1580s. The fresco crowns the Sala di Costantino in the Vatican, and it was surrounded by other paintings relating to the history of Christianity [Fig. 1.2].⁵⁹ Working in the wake of the 1563 Council of Trent, amid the so-called ‘Counter-Reformation’, Laureti here depicts – and of course in a *painted* medium – the ‘triumph of Christianity’. Hegel himself never saw the painting (or visited Rome). Had he known of the fresco, though, he might have seized upon it as an iconic emblem of the intertwined self-discoveries of both romantic art and religion: in this act of religious iconoclasm, (the image of) Christ on the cross is shown to destroy the pagan sculptures of classical antiquity; Christianity at once empties ancient art of its idolatrous totemism and renders classical sculpture a past, cultural ruin.⁶⁰

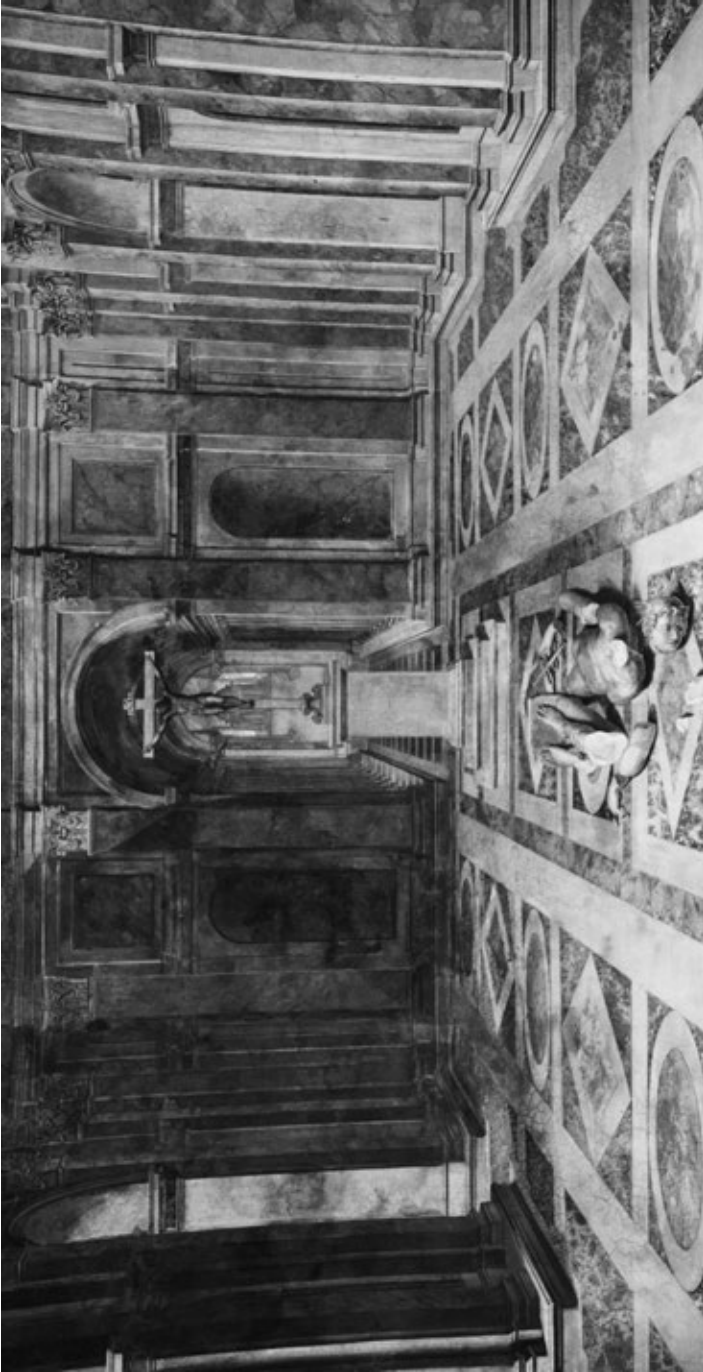
Hegel’s discussion of the romantic leads to his famous predictions about the future *Auflösung*, or ‘dissolution’, of art.⁶¹ The Reformation,

58 Hegel 1975, 103. On the centrality of the Reformation to Hegel’s teleology, see – in addition to Squire’s chapter in this volume – Eberling 1974, esp. 15–18; B.M.G. Reardon 1977, esp. 58–76; Knox 1978, 93–104; and Houlgate 1997, esp. 5–15; cf. also Koerner 2004, esp. 32–37.

59 Cf. Squire 2011, 154–201, esp. 154–157, 197–198; for further discussion, see Bull 2005, 385–387.

60 Yet what makes the painting so interesting, in my view, are the ontological ambiguities to which it gives form (that is, what we might call its ‘iconoclasm’): cf. Koerner 2004, 12, along with Koerner 2002 and the other essays in Latour and Weibel 2002). Set up on its pedestal, the embodied effigy of Christ is inscribed with the same totemic immediacy as the ancient statue which it destroys: the crucifix, in other words, out-idols even the pagan idolatry that it annihilates ...

61 See above all Hegel 1975, 9–11, 593–611, 1236–1237. Hegel’s discussions of the belatedness and dissolution of art have sparked a substantial bibliography. In



1.2 Tommaso Laureti, *Triumph of Christianity* (ceiling-fresco in the Sala di Costantino in the Vatican), c. 1585. Photograph by Michael Squire.

Hegel argues, had emancipated art from the hegemony of religion:⁶² ‘we have got beyond venerating works of art as divine and worshipping them’, so that ‘the impression they make is of a more reflective kind, and what they arouse in us needs a higher touchstone and a different test’.⁶³ Now that art has transcended its earlier purpose of making the divine sensuously present, and indeed of aspiring to an ideal beauty of form, it is free to chart a new secular path.⁶⁴ And yet, since art satisfies us when it takes an active role in religious life – that is, when it gives sensuous form to the divine – art can no longer engage us in the ways it had done

addition to the chapters in this volume by e.g. Pippin, Clark, Kottman, Torsen and Gardner, see *inter alios* Bungay 1984, 71–89; Henrich 1985; Belting 1987; Hast 1991; Carter 1993; Gethmann-Siefert 1994; Houlgate 1997; Clark 1999; Besançon 2000, 215–221; Rapp 2000; Weibel 2002; Horowitz 2002; Oetjen 2003; Danto 2004 (alongside the author’s key earlier contributions – cf. below, n. 75); Franke and Gethmann-Siefert 2005; Pippin 2005, 296–302; Gaiger 2006a; Geulen 2006; Speight 2009; Pippin 2014.

62 Cf. Hendrix 2005, 6 (‘Romantic art frees reason from an identity with the real, and enacts an allegory of the dialectical relation of reason to itself in self-consciousness; Romantic art is thus the first modern art, or the new beginning of artistic representation in the modern world’), along with Houlgate 1997, 9 (‘What is distinctive about Protestantism is not that it shuns all aesthetic expression as such, but rather that it frees art from dominance by religion and so allows it to become fully *secular*’). As Hegel 1975, 517–29, explains, the modern condition, which allows artistic form to express itself independently of content (and vice versa), might in fact be to art’s benefit. In classical art, the subjective inner element is so integral to the external form that each is dependent on the other; romantic art, by contrast, ‘as *art* is not the didactic revelation which produces the content of truth for contemplation simply and solely in the form of art; on the contrary, the content of romantic art is already present explicitly to mind and feeling outside the sphere of art ... Therewith externality is regarded as an indifferent element in which spirit has no final trust or persistence’ (ibid., 526).

63 Hegel 1975, 10.

64 See e.g. Hegel 1975, 594: ‘In romantic art [in contrast to the classical] ..., where inwardness withdraws itself into itself, the entire material of the external world acquires freedom to go its own way and maintain itself according to its own special and particular character’; cf. e.g. ibid., 602, 605 (discussing how, ‘in our day, in the case of almost all peoples, criticism, the cultivation of reflection, and, in our German case, freedom of thought have mastered the artists too, and have made them, so to say, a *tabula rasa* in respect of the material and the form of their productions, after the necessary particular stages of the romantic art-form have been traversed’, 605).

before. Since art has lost its highest vocation *as art*, it must instead look to philosophy for ratification, refutation or reification:⁶⁵

In all these respects art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our *ideas* instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place. What is now aroused in us by works of art is not just immediate enjoyment but our judgement also, since we subject to our intellectual consideration (i) the content of art, and (ii) the work of art's means of presentation, and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of both to one another. The *philosophy* of art is therefore a greater need in our day than it was in days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is.

Hegel is slightly vague about what future art might look like. But he does provide some hints in the third and final section of the *Lectures*, dedicated to 'The system of individual arts' [*Das System der einzelnen Künste*].⁶⁶ Different kinds of art are differently suited to the three artistic forms sketched in the second part of the *Lectures*, he explains:⁶⁷

65 Hegel 1975, 11. As Pippin 2005, 300, glosses the sentiment: 'Representational art cannot adequately express the full subjectivity of experience, the wholly self-legislating, self-authorizing status of the norms that constitute such subjectivity, or, thus, cannot adequately express who we (now) are. Only philosophy can "heal" such a self-inflicted wound and allow the self-determining character of experience its adequate expression.'

66 Hegel 1975, 613–1237 – with synopses at 82–90 and 621–629.

67 Cf. Hegel 1975, 90. On the connection between the second and third parts of the *Lectures*, cf. above, n. 36. Hegel is at pains to emphasise the *complexity* of the relationship between the individual types of art and their generic symbolic, classical and romantic forms: there are of course classical and romantic kinds of architecture (cf. *ibid.*, 634), and Hegel discusses both at length (*ibid.*, 660–700). Likewise, sculpture is not specific to the classical form of art – its history encompasses both symbolic and romantic Christian forms (e.g. *ibid.*, 708, 966). By extension, painting has a classical prehistory (*ibid.*, 799–802), and Hegel is not unaware of Chinese and Indian forms (e.g. *ibid.*, 799). Most complex of all is the history of poetry, not least given the range of subsidiary genres (e.g. *ibid.*,

broadly speaking, the ‘external’ art of architecture proves to be the form most suited to the symbolic, the ‘objective’ art of sculpture is perfected by the classical, and the ‘subjective’ art of painting (like music and poetry – above all lyric)⁶⁸ reaches fruition in the romantic.⁶⁹ And yet in the modern, (post-) romantic world, none of these media can truly satisfy, at least in the ways they had done before.⁷⁰ Hegel’s comments about Dutch and Flemish still-lives – judged among the most ‘advanced’ genres of romantic painting precisely because of their ‘prosaic’ subject⁷¹ – intimate something about the direction of the visual arts. But clearly

1035–1039). In each case, Hegel explains, it is possible to trace the development of specific kinds of art across his tripartite system of artistic forms – whether to chart earlier histories, or posthumous shifts; however, ‘these deviations did not reach the summit of art but either were the preparatory attempts of inferior beginnings or else displayed the start of a transition to an art which, in this transition, seized on a subject-matter, and a way of treating the material, of a type that only a further art was permitted to develop completely’ (ibid., 966).

68 Cf. Hegel 1975, 527–528, on music and lyric, along with e.g. ibid., 1031 and 1111–1157 on lyric poetry.

69 For the connection, cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 626: ‘For painting is not concerned with making visible as such but with the visibility which is both self-particularizing and also inwardized’ – along with the chapters in this volume by Rush, Grootenboer and Pippin.

70 Not even poetry – after reaching its zenith – can satisfy the prosaic mindset of the modern: ‘No Homer, Sophocles, etc., no Dante, Ariosto, or Shakespeare can appear in our day; what was so magnificently sung, what so freely expressed, has been expressed; these are materials, ways of looking at them and treating them which have been sung once and for all ... (Hegel 1975, 608). Cf. ibid., 968: ‘Only as a result of considering the series of the arts in this way does poetry appear as that particular art in which art itself begins at the same time to dissolve and acquire in the eyes of philosophy its point of transition to religious pictorial thinking as such, as well as to the prose of scientific thought. The realm of the beautiful ... is bordered on one side by the prose of finitude and commonplace thinking, out of which art struggles on its way to truth, and on the other side the higher spheres of religion and philosophy where there is a transition to that apprehension of the Absolute which is still further removed from the sensuous sphere.’

71 For Hegel’s thinking about Dutch and Flemish painting (which he is at pains to associate with the Protestant theologies: cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 597–598), see especially the chapters in this book by Rush and Grootenboer. More generally on the forms of modern art, see e.g. Rush 2010 and Rutter 2010.

Hegel envisages art's future as lying in non-visual kinds of art – in his comments about contemporary music (Bach, Handel and Mozart),⁷² for example, and not least his comments on poetry (epic, lyric, drama and above all comedy).⁷³

HEGEL AND ART HISTORY

Hegel's comments on the 'dissolution' or *Auflösung* of art have had a profound and enduring impact on the historiography of modern art. As Hegel predicted (and in part helped to initiate),⁷⁴ the phenomenon of 'modernism' has come to preoccupy the study of aesthetics. The Hegelian idea of a modernist rupture has likewise shaped the stories that modern histories of art and aesthetics have come to tell – from Arthur Danto's writings on art as the 'object of its own theoretical consciousness',⁷⁵ to

72 Cf. Hegel 1975, 888–958, defining 'what alone is fitted for expression in music' as 'the object-free inner life, abstract subjectivity as such' (891); cf. *ibid.*, 959, on the 'forward step' of romantic music 'in that it made inner life as such, and subjective feeling, something for apprehension by the inner life, not in visible shapes, but in the figurations of inwardly reverberating sound'. On Hegel's attitudes towards music – something which is (not for want of trying!) rather downplayed in our volume – see e.g. Johnson 1991, Espiña 1997, Rollmann 2005, Bowie 2007 and Goehr 2008, esp. 71–75. 'I am little versed in this sphere [of music]', Hegel 1975, 893, claimed, 'and must therefore excuse myself in advance for restricting myself simply to the more general points and to single remarks' (cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 1093).

73 For some comments on Hegel's approach to the history of poetry's development (cf. Hegel 1975, 627–628, 1035–1039) – and the flourishing field of scholarship on Hegel-Shakespeare studies in particular – see Kottman's chapter in this volume. According to Hegel, comedy 'leads ... to the dissolution of art altogether': 'satisfied in itself, it [absolute subjective personality] no longer unites itself with anything objective and particularized and it brings the negative side of this dissolution into consciousness in the humour of comedy' (Hegel 1975, 1236, with discussion in e.g. Pippin 2014, 142–143).

74 Cf. Hegel 1975, 1236: 'Now at the end we have arranged every essential category of the beautiful and every essential form of art into a philosophical garland, and weaving it is one of the worthiest tasks that philosophy is capable of completing.'

75 Danto 1986, 111. Cf. e.g. Danto 1997 and 2004 – along with e.g. Gaiger 2000 and Houlgate 2013.

Georges Didi-Hubermann's laments about our modernist 'forgetting' of earlier visual modes.⁷⁶

But Hegel has exerted a still more profound influence on the broader disciplinary project of art history. If, as Ernst Gombrich famously wrote, Hegel is in one sense the 'father of art history',⁷⁷ it is also true (as Michael Ann Holly puts it) that 'there remains something of the Hegelian epistemology in the work of every art historian'.⁷⁸ One aspect of this heritage lies in the art historical quest to make objects speak of the broader cultural contexts in which they are situated – whether social, economic, cultural, intellectual and theological. Another part lies in the drive to track changes in both artistic form and cultural framework, and thereby to construct a narrative of development: quite apart from the work of Jacob Burckhardt a little later in the nineteenth century, one might consider the histories of stylistic form that Heinrich Wölfflin and Alois Riegl constructed (not least Riegl's notion of *Kunstwollen*).⁷⁹ In all this, Hegel's foremost legacy has been to offer a counterweight to Kant: where Kant bestowed art history with its essentialist concept of subjective aesthetic experience, Hegel has given it its residual *historicising* impulse.⁸⁰

76 Didi-Hubermann 1990, 16. On the ways in which Hegel set the agenda for modern definitions of art, cf. the important recent contribution of Andina 2013; Podro 1982, esp. 17–30, still offers a stimulating introduction to Hegel's place within a German tradition of the 'critical historians of art'.

77 Gombrich 1977, 203 (cf. Gombrich 1989, 59). On Gombrich's relation to Hegel – and his self-characterisation as a 'runaway Hegelian' – see also Summers 2007.

78 Holly 1984, 30.

79 The bibliography is immense: for the best introduction, see Elsner 2006a. For my own attempt to chart some of the broader Kantian and Hegelian tussles of art history from the early nineteenth century to the modern day, cf. Squire 2009, 74–87 (with more detailed bibliography). Among recent disciplinary 'histories' of art history, Locher 2001, 17–97; Minor 2007; and Iversen and Melville 2010 are particularly recommended.

80 Cf. e.g. Cheetham 1998, 6: 'Kant and Hegel have arguably had the greatest influence of any philosophers on the discipline of art history and on artists, and their effects are perhaps equal in scope and significance' (with further comments in Cheetham 2001); cf. also Foster 2002, 85, on the Kantian and Hegelian positions as a 'tension [that] has run through the discipline like a fault line'. This historiography, I think, goes some way to explaining an essential quandary of art history as a discipline: 'we seem faced with an inescapable choice between an ahistorical appreciation of the artwork as an aesthetic object and a historical understanding of it that tends to reduce it to a symptom of its social-historical context' (Mattick 2003, 114); cf. also Podro 1982, xviii–xx ('One reason why there

Hegel's particular mode of historicising can of course be situated within his cultural context, above all in early nineteenth-century Prussia.⁸¹ His account of the development of the classical and romantic, for example, might be thought to be indebted to a long-standing competition between 'ancient' and 'modern' forms, ultimately stemming back to the *Querelles des anciens et des modernes* in late seventeenth-century France.⁸² Likewise, as Whitney Davis shows in this book, Hegel's thinking about Egyptian art – and about symbolic art-forms in general – is indebted to the views of earlier German thinkers: ultimately, the symbolic and romantic both serve as a foil for championing the supreme beauty of Greek forms.⁸³ The history of collecting and displaying artworks proves

was difficulty about the distinction between two kinds of inquiry stems from what has been observed about the nature of art itself – its being both context-bound and yet irreducible to its contextual conditions ... The critical historians were constantly treading a tightrope between the two').

81 For some introductions, see the essays in Pöggeler and Bonsiepen 1981 and Pöggeler and Gethmann-Siefert 1983.

82 Cf. Barasch 2000, II: 182–183. On the ways in which these *querelles* stimulated discussion of aesthetics in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Germany, see Jauss 1970, 67–106; Szondi 1974; Levine 1999; for their continuing influence beyond the Enlightenment, the key contribution is Riley 2001, esp. 86. The history of earlier Enlightenment views of 'antiquity' prove crucial here: for a survey of the recent bibliography (with reference to e.g. the work of Dan Edelstein, Peter Gay and Franco Venturi), see Lifschitz and Squire 2017, esp. 23–29, in the context of Lessing's 1766 *Laocoon*.

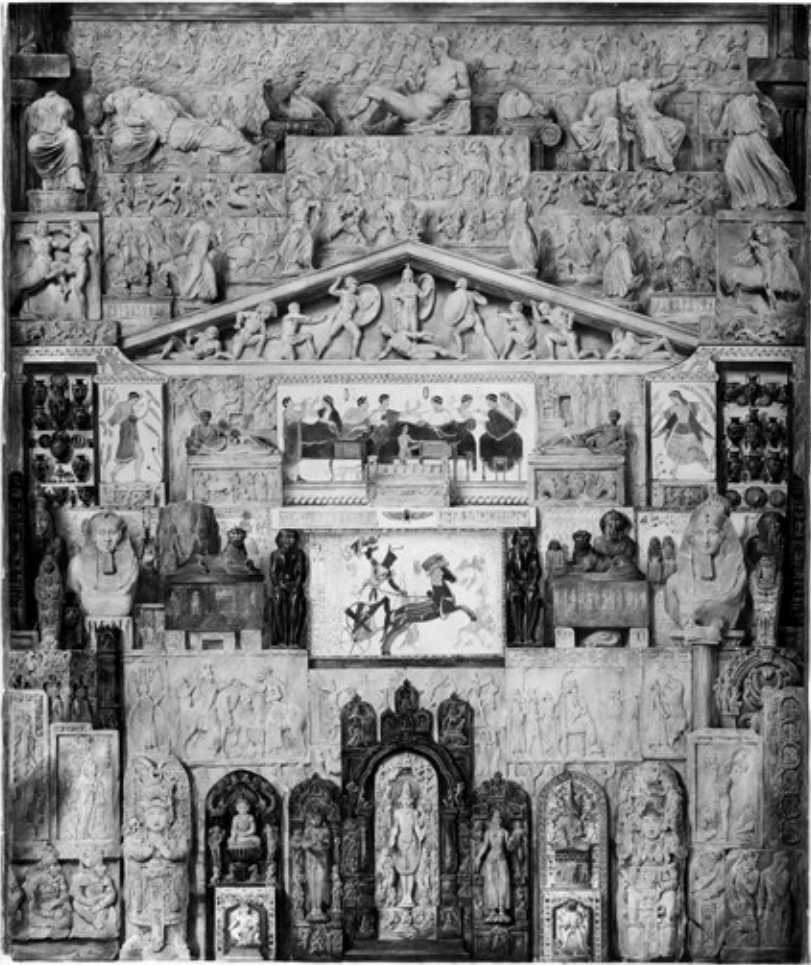
83 In essence, Hegel's tripartite narrative of art amounts to a history of 'pre-Greek', 'Greek' and 'post-Greek' forms: cf. Squire's chapter in this volume. On Greek antiquity's grip over the aesthetic thinking of the German Enlightenment and early nineteenth century, see e.g. Butler 1935, Marchand 1996, Billings 2014 and Valdez 2014; Koch 2013, 201–404, provides an excellent introduction to 'die neuzeitliche Erschließung der antiken Kunstschriftstellerei' more generally. Compare Güthenke 2008, esp. 20–43: on the one hand, as Güthenke's suggestively puts it, the legacy of classical antiquity constituted the 'Greek landscape of the German soul' (44–92). On the other, it also gave rise to a particular self-defining attitude of 'modernity', shaped by the Hellenophilia of German romanticism: "Modern" is seen in opposition to two notions: that of the complete or harmonious or not fragmented, which is its lost origin and in an altered shape its driving goal, and secondly, that of the past or ancient, especially at a time when artistic debate redefined or at least still remembered the normative character of ancient models. The difference from the past becomes the condition of modernity ... Here Greece enters' (41).

crucial too. Beat Wyss, for example, has drawn a comparison between Hegel's thinking and the organisation of Karl Friedrich Schinkel's new Königliches Museum in Berlin (now known as the Altes Museum), which was being constructed at precisely the time when Hegel delivered his lectures.⁸⁴ Beyond Prussia, one might draw an analogy between the story of artistic progress told by Hegel and the sorts of narratives being forged by newly founded national museums across Europe.⁸⁵ A particularly revealing parallel comes in James Stephanoff's painting, dating from the early 1840s, of *An Assemblage of Works of Art, from the Earliest Period to the Time of Pheidias* [Fig. 1.3]. Stephanoff's 'assemblage' brings together works from (among other places) Egypt, South America, India, Etruria and Greece. Embedded within the painting, however, is also an idea of progressive artistic advancement: it is classical art that occupies the literal and metaphorical high point; indeed, the triangular pediment that encase the Aegina architectural statues signals the progressive forward thrust of art's development.⁸⁶

84 Wyss 1999, esp. 104–110. Although Hegel does not mention Schinkel by name, the neoclassical designs of his new museum (and the Prussian capital at large) seem to lie behind the statement that 'in Germany we have long followed the Italians or the French [in architecture], until now at last we have turned to the Greeks again and taken classical art in its purer form as our model' (Hegel 1975, 683). The *Lectures* also at times mention particular Berlin galleries and exhibitions (e.g. *ibid.*, 790, 820–821, 856).

85 For the most explicit comments – made, according to Hotho, on 17 February 1829, before the opening of the Königliches Museum in August 1830 – see Hegel 1975, 870: 'For example, unless we bring with us in the case of each picture a knowledge of the country, period, and school to which it belongs and of the master who painted it, most galleries seem to be a senseless confusion out of which we cannot find our way. Thus, the greatest aid to study and intelligent enjoyment is an *historical* arrangement. Such a collection, historically ordered, unique and invaluable of its kind, we shall soon have an opportunity to admire in the picture gallery of the Royal Museum [Königliches Museum] here in Berlin. In this collection there will be clearly recognizable not only the external history of painting, i.e. the development of technique, but the essential progress of the inner history of painting, i.e. its different schools and subjects, as well as the conception of these and their mode of treatment.'

86 On Stephanoff's image, cf. Jenkins 1992, 61–65. More generally on the rise of European museums, see the essays in Paul 2014 – with Thomas W. Gaetgen's chapter on 'Building Prussia's first modern museum' (at 285–304).



1.3 James Stephanoff, *An Assemblage of Works of Art from the Earliest Period to the Time of Pheidias*, c. 1845 (74.3 × 62.2 cm). Drawing and watercolour on paper. London: British Museum, inv. 1994.1210.6. © Trustees of the British Museum. Reproduced in colour as Plate 1.

Hegel himself would have been the first to acknowledge the ‘situatedness’ of his account.⁸⁷ Within the Hegelian teleology, art is said to have reached its most developed forms in Protestant Prussia: in an age of mounting pan-Germanism, Hegel even associates the achievements of Flemish and Dutch painting with ‘what is strictly German’ (playing upon the adjective ‘*deutsch*’ to refer to both the German and the Dutch).⁸⁸ In all this, national stereotypes loom large – no surprise, perhaps, given Hegel’s foundational premise that the art itself reveals the distinctive cultural outlooks of different peoples.⁸⁹ Hegel is no less explicit about his own contemporary German perspective:⁹⁰ following good Enlightenment precedent, he frequently alludes to how ‘we Germans’ [*wir Deutsche*] view the world and themselves,⁹¹ often defining (as indeed at times lampooning) German aesthetic tastes against a French antitype.⁹²

But simply to label the *Lectures on Aesthetics* ‘Eurocentric’, ‘nationalist’ or ‘imperialist’ would be unfair. True, Hegel was no postcolonial thinker (how could he have been?): his views were shaped by his age and national context. Likewise, many of Hegel’s specific judgments – about ‘primitive’ peoples, and by extension perhaps even his teleological narrative about artistic self-discovery – lend themselves to cultural and political misuse; given the conditioning of our own viewpoints in the twenty-first century (not least the unmitigated horrors of National Socialism), it is easier to dismiss the *Lectures* than it is seriously to engage with them. However,

87 Cf. above, pp. 30–32 – along with e.g. Hegel 1975, 603: ‘Now just as every man is a child of his time in every activity, whether political, religious, or scientific, and just as he has the task of bringing out the essential content and the therefore necessary form of that time, so it is the vocation of art to find for the spirit of a people the artistic expression corresponding to it.’

88 Cf. Hegel 1975, 882–7, quotation from 882. On Hegel’s comments here, cf. the chapters by Rush and Grootenboer in this volume; more generally on the nationalist stakes, cf. Moxey 1998.

89 Cf. Hegel 1975, 285: ‘In this way art and its specific mode of production hangs together with the specific nationality of peoples.’

90 Hence Hegel’s reflections on his own national tastes, not least in the context of contemporary German poetry. Particularly relevant are his assessments of Schiller and Goethe: ‘Goethe’s songs are the most excellent, profound and effective things given to Germany in recent times, because they belong entirely to him and his nation, and since they have emerged on our own soil they also completely strike the fundamental note of our spirit’ (Hegel 1975, 1157).

91 E.g. Hegel 1975, 235, 269, 274, 620, 919, 946, 1124.

92 E.g. Hegel 1975, 6–7, 268, 269, 620, 684, 1175.

to reject the whole project of Hegelian aesthetics as simply ‘totalitarian’ would be a mistake. Quite apart from the dazzling breadth of knowledge that they display, the *Lectures* show a degree of respect to *all* forms of artistic production.⁹³ Unlike many of his contemporaries, Hegel in fact invested a great deal of effort in engaging with the history of art across the globe, whether in his treatment of Indian poetry,⁹⁴ for example, or in his analyses of Indian, Persian and Chinese art.⁹⁵ While he did not shrink from making qualitative judgments about the form or content of art across the globe – and while he was convinced, given his teleological

93 The introduction to the *Lectures* nicely demonstrates the point in the context of art that is either geographically or chronologically removed from nineteenth-century German tastes (Hegel 1975, 20–21). One can learn from and enjoy the artistic products of all times and places, we are told, even if they ‘lie outside the circle and forms’ of the romantic: ‘These works, because of their age or foreign nationality, have of course something strange about them for us, but they have a content which outsoars their foreignness and is common to all mankind, and only by the prejudice of theory could they be stamped as products of a barbarous bad taste’. Indeed, it is the ‘growth of spiritual receptivity’ in modern Europe that has enabled scholarship on the history of art in the first place – which has in turn ‘extended people’s intellectual horizons in every direction’.

94 Cf. Hegel 1975, 366–368 (and cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 374–375, 478, 978). Despite the ‘wealth of fancy which seems at first sight to be deployed there’, Krishna’s recitations in Indian poetry are nonetheless said to be, ‘extremely monotonous and, on the whole, empty and wearisome’ (367–368). For Hegel, Indian poetry cannot rival Greek – which is ‘always admired and imitated anew by the most different peoples because human nature has reached its most beautiful development in it alike in its subject-matter and artistic form’ (978). ‘Yet even Indian poetry,’ Hegel continues, ‘despite all its distance from our view of the world and from our mode of portrayal, is not wholly strange to us, and we can laud its as a high privilege of our age to have begun more and more to unveil its sense for the whole richness of art and, in short, of the human spirit.’ Something similar might be said of what Hegel labelled the ‘Mohammadan’ poetry of Persia (cf. *ibid.*, 368–371): on account of its ‘depth and childlikeness of heart’ (*ibid.*, 370), such poetry deserves ‘special praise’ for offering ‘a contemplative view of the world, a relation of the spirit to the things of this world which lies nearer to the mind of age than of youth’ (*ibid.*, 999; cf. 1094–1098).

95 Hegel’s assessments of other ‘eastern’ art-forms are essentially similar to those of Egyptian sculpture (cf. above, pp. 35–36): e.g. Hegel 1975, 341 (‘Indian art does not get beyond the grotesque intermixture of the natural and the human, so that neither side gets its right, and both are reciprocally vitiated’). Chinese and Indian painting is mentioned only in passing (above all at *ibid.*, 799).

framework, that his own views were more advanced than those of other peoples⁹⁶ – his system is nonetheless founded on a certain degree of relativism.⁹⁷ Indeed, Hegel's own national pride is based on the values of post-Enlightenment, German *Wissenschaft*.⁹⁸

Therefore we must keep to the primitive epics and disentangle ourselves not only from views antagonistic to them and current in our actual present but also, and above all, from false aesthetic theories and claims, if we wish to study and enjoy the original outlook of peoples, this great natural history of spirit. We may congratulate recent times, and our German nation in particular, on attaining this end by breaking down the old limitations of the scientific intellect, and by freeing spirit from restricted views, making it receptive of such outlooks. These we must receive as those of individuals, entitled to be what they were, as the justified spirits of peoples whose minds and deeds confront us as revealed in their epics.

For Hegel, what is so advanced about his 1820s Prussian academic context is its abiding respect for *all* forms of knowledge: the achievement whereby, in the wake of the *Aufklärung*, all aspects of human culture, regardless of time and place, are deemed worthy of serious 'scientific' study. In this sense, as Kai Hammermeister has put it, Hegel offered 'a veritable world history of art'.⁹⁹

But there is another reason why the *Lectures on Aesthetics* deserve scholarly revisiting. In recent years, especially in the UK and North America, many of the interests that motivated Hegel have resurfaced in the disciplinary field of art history (despite a certain reluctance to

96 For the classic postcolonial deconstruction of western attitudes to the 'oriental' other in particular (albeit without reference to Hegel), see Said 1978.

97 For an example, cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 44–5, discussing at once non-European responses to the European configurations of beauty, and the European reception of Chinese, Hottentot and African art: 'Indeed, if we examine the works of art of these non-European peoples, their images of the gods, for example, which have sprung from their fancy as sublime and worthy of veneration, they may present themselves to us as the most hideous idols; and while their music may sound in our ears as the most detestable noise, they on their side will regard our sculptures, pictures, and music, as meaningless or ugly.'

98 Hegel 1975, 1077 (in the context of analysing poetry).

99 Hammermeister 2002, 24.

engage with the Hegelian ancestry). Over the last decade in particular, there has been much talk of 'global' approaches to the history of art, with a burgeoning bibliography to match.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, the transformation of so many departments of 'art history' into centres for 'visual studies', often championing a comparative or cross-cultural aspect, chimes with elements of Hegel's own approach – not least in probing how visual materials not only reflect but also constitute cultural ideas.¹⁰¹ In some ways, the underlying concerns of Hegel's *Lectures* look more contemporary than ever. And the questions that Hegel raised, some two centuries ago, have never appeared more urgent.

100 For some of the most scintillating recent interventions, see e.g. Summers 2002, Elkins 2007, Carrier 2008, Belting 2011 (translating an influential German book that was first published in 2001) and Elsner 2017 – each with detailed bibliographic review. These new intellectual horizons provide an opportunity at once to expand and revisit Hegelian approaches – to defuse the prejudices of Hegel's arguments while nonetheless testing their philosophical force. One might argue, for example, that Hegel misdiagnosed the 'Oriental' east, out of ignorance or parochial prejudice (cf. Davis' chapter in this volume). And yet – if it were deemed possible to keep at arm's length the racism or cultural prejudice – one might still think that aspects of the account prove enlightening: an argument might be made, for instance, for parallel developments in 'symbolic', 'classical' and 'romantic' forms in the arts of China, Japan or India ...

101 The earliest use of the term 'visual culture' in English that I know of is Alpers 1983: xxv, acknowledging a debt to the work of Michael Baxandall. On the ideology of 'visual culture', see Herbert 2003, together with the discussions in Bryson, Holly and Moxey 1994, Mitchell 1995 and Mirzoeff 1999. For some sharp-sighted overviews of the term's epistemological stakes, see Moxey 2001, 103–123; Bal 2003; Elkins 2003, esp. 125–195; and Cherry 2004. Hegel, I think, would have wanted to reserve the special place for 'art' (cf. Hegel 1975, 3–14, distinguishing between 'art which is *free* alike in its ends and in its means' [7] and hence, for instance, between 'the war-paint of the savages' and 'the splendour of temples with all their riches of adornment' [3]). Still, there is something deeply Hegelian in contemporary talk of 'visual culture'. As van Eck and Winters 2005, 4, maintain, the very notion of visual culture, derived as it is from structural semiotics, is itself predicated on an ideological subsumption of images to words: 'the visuality studied by practitioners of visual culture is not the visual as such, but its verbal interpretation by the beholder'; 'their visual theory is not a theory of the visual arts, but a theory of the beholder who speaks; and that theory is derived directly from semiology'.

INTERVENTIONIST CONVERSATIONS

In putting this volume together, we were not unaware that 2018 marks the second centenary of the *Lectures on Aesthetics*: it was in the summer semester of 1818, at the University of Heidelberg, that Hegel first ascended the podium to offer a version of his *Vorlesungen*. The anniversary strikes us as an appropriate occasion for thinking about what Hegel might offer the contemporary field of art history, as indeed about how modern art historical insights might nuance our retrospective view of Hegelian aesthetics. How can a Hegelian perspective inform our art historical questions? And how can art history help us to make sense – and use – of Hegelian philosophy?

Of course, ours is not the first book to explore Hegel's contribution in the field of art history.¹⁰² Where this book differs, though, is in its range of disciplinary perspectives, and hence in the sorts of conversations that it seeks to initiate. Hegel has loomed large in the study of 'modernism', above all with reference to the art of the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. But he has been conspicuously missing in (among other subjects) the fields of Egyptology, classical archaeology and mediaeval art history, or for that matter in the study of non-western art. For Hegel, all of these subjects form part and parcel of a single mode of historical-cum-philosophical analysis. By bringing together different specialists, we thus stage a dialogue between Hegelian scholars and those who work on the specific cultures, periods and art-forms that Hegel discussed.

We begin, in the first part of the book, with three contributions that look back to antiquity, whether to explore how Hegel helps us to understand the historical workings of Egyptian and Graeco-Roman art, or else to assess how those materials shed light on Hegel's thinking. The next chapter, by Whitney Davis, reaches furthest back in time – to the Egyptian materials that Hegel associated with the first, 'symbolic' stage of art. Fundamental to Hegel's understanding of this material, as we have noted, is its supposed opacity: the symbolic is defined around the arbitrary relation between inner 'meaning' [*Bedeutung*] and outer form [*Gestalt*]. For Hegel, Egyptian imagery – like Egyptian architecture and writing – is subsequently defined around its enigmatic resistance to full decipherability. But to what extent, Davis asks, is this a feature

¹⁰² See especially the essays in Houlgate 2007.

that inheres in Egyptian art, and to what extent is it instead a modern ideological projection?

In answering that question, Davis's chapter is concerned as much with ideological colour as with historiographic derivation. Hegel's attitudes towards Egypt are adapted from those of other thinkers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Davis argues. While tracing some of Hegel's conceptual debts, Davis nonetheless adopts a different (and wholly more relativist) global art historical perspective: by looking to modern parallels in world art – many of them unknown to Hegel – he teases out some of the parochial aspects of Hegel's thinking. The chapter concentrates on just one aspect of Egyptian figurative art: namely, its recourse to 'theriomorphic' images of rulers and gods – hybrid forms that combine animal and human elements (as used to figure the likes of Anubis and Horus, for example, or most famously in the Egyptian sphinx).¹⁰³ In Hegel's eyes, such forms epitomise the primitive confusions of Egyptian art:¹⁰⁴ theriomorphism itself serves as a 'symbol' for the 'symbolic', since Hegel thinks that the 'body of a brute' can never be the 'domicile' of a human soul.¹⁰⁵ But a global history of art – a degree of 'cosmological perspectivism' (as Davis puts it) – can help us to see otherwise. What happens to the Hegelian narrative when we view Egyptian theriomorphism from a broader comparative anthropological perspective? Need the phenomenon necessarily point to a 'pre-self-consciousness', as Hegel would suggest, rather than to alternative (but equally sophisticated) 'onto-theologies', premised on non-anthropomorphic theodicies of representation? Indeed, if we proceed from this wholly more relativist, postcolonial starting-point, what are the implications for Hegel's narrative – and in world art terms?

103 Cf. above, n. 47. According to Hegel (e.g. 1975, 656), such forms themselves provide a symbol for the external forms of symbolic architecture.

104 Cf. above, pp. 35–36. Among those whose art is symbolic in form, Hegel claims, the Egyptians are the 'properly artistic people' (Hegel 1975, 354). But 'their works remain mysterious and dumb, mute and motionless, because here spirit itself has still not really found its inner life and still cannot speak the clear and distinct language of spirit'.

105 The sentiment is fundamental to the shift that Hegel posits between symbolic and classical forms: 'Thus in classical art the character of the animal form is altered in every respect; here the animal form is used to indicate the evil, the bad, the trivial, the natural, and the unspiritual, whereas formerly it was the expression of the positive and the Absolute' (Hegel 1975, 453; cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 714).

With Julia Peters' chapter we move from the symbolic to the classical – and, above all, to Hegel's discussion of Greek sculpture. For Hegel, the classical stands at a liminal moment: the inherent beauty of Greek statuary, Hegel claims, resides in the new convergence of form with content.¹⁰⁶ Peters explores what the ideal beauty of classical art reveals about the larger assumptions driving the Hegelian narrative, homing in on Hegel's discussion of spirit [*Geist*] and nature [*Natur*] in particular. According to Hegel's account, she argues, what is so special – and indeed, revealing – about classical art is not the anthropological gesture of liberating subjects from the realm of nature; rather, classical sculpture reveals that mankind, as spiritual being, is identical with (and indeed made manifest through) external, natural form. What classical art makes known, then, is the idea that nature is inherently spiritual. This explains the importance that Hegel ascribes to the human figurative forms of classical image-making – the feature which, appropriately enough, modern parlance describes as its 'naturalism':¹⁰⁷ for all the differences between the histories of Greek philosophy and sculpture (the one proceeding conceptually, the other by taking on sensory form), both reveal nature – and more specifically, human nature – to be a manifestation of spirit.

Michael Squire's chapter likewise takes its lead from Hegel's comments on classical art-forms. Where Peters is interested in the Hegelian *philosophy* of Greek art, however, Squire approaches his subject from the disciplinary perspective of classical art history. The *Lectures on Aesthetics* have much to offer classical art historians, he argues, not least in their intertwined approach to the history of art and religion; indeed, Hegel anticipated some of the most scintillating work in the field – above all, recent discussions of art, epiphany and religion, not to mention work on the ontology of ancient imagery. And yet, in Squire's self-confessedly 'bipolar' response, Hegel's own theological assumptions give cause for anxiety. Fundamental to Hegel's account, after all, are theologically

106 As Hegel 1975, 427, programmatically puts it, the classical is founded on 'a unification of the content with its entirely adequate shape'; cf. also Squire's chapter in this volume.

107 For an overview, cf. Squire 2011, 32–68 – along with Elsner 2006b and Neer 2010. Indebted to earlier thinkers (above all Winckelmann), Hegel of course anticipated the point that the 'naturalistic' figurative forms of Greek sculpture nonetheless reach *beyond* the 'natural' – 'not as merely natural form but as the figure and expression of the spirit' (Hegel 1975, 726–727).

contingent ideas about the ‘form’ and ‘content’ of art – ideas derived, first and foremost, from the theological protestations of sixteenth-century reformers. If, in the words of Joseph Koerner, ‘the Reformation reshaped what the visual image *is*’,¹⁰⁸ Hegel was the first to devise a grand narrative of artistic progress around this shift. But is it possible to subscribe to the Hegelian account – to operate within it – without subscribing to the underlying theology? Does it matter that the very system of Hegelian aesthetics – the whole progressivist thrust of its teleology – is centred around a theologically contingent *problem* of art? Indeed, as Squire asks, what is left from the Hegelian account when one attempts to reconcile it with other theological perspectives?

While the first three contributors begin by looking back to antiquity, the following pair of chapters – by Fred Rush and Hanneke Grootenboer – explore the rise of artistic self-consciousness. Both chapters take their lead from Hegel’s analysis of romantic painting. Yet they tackle the theme from disparate chronological perspectives. On the one hand, Rush focuses on Dutch and Flemish painting from the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: he charts the rise of painterly genres which – with profound self-consciousness and reflexivity – thematise the resources of painting as artistic medium. On the other, Grootenboer begins in the twentieth century, examining the literal and metaphorical ‘reflections’ of Richard Estes’ photorealistic paintings (above all those from the late 1960s and 1970s): if the concern, once again, is with the self-awareness with which painting has come to probe the nature of representation, her chapter centres around a post-Hegelian painterly case study.

Hegel’s comments about Dutch and Flemish painting – one of the most famous sections of the *Lectures on Aesthetics* – provide Rush with his starting-point. As is well known, Hegel inverts contemporary hierarchies of painterly subject: rather than champion history or mythological subjects, he constructed a schema in which so-called ‘still life’ images occupy, at least philosophically, the zenith of romantic painting.¹⁰⁹ In what ways, then, might an art historical examination of this material help us to understand and evaluate Hegel’s thinking? In order to demonstrate why Dutch and Flemish examples materialise the principal achievement of romantic painting, Rush turns to the history of both the still life and

108 Koerner 2004, 39.

109 Cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 887.

the painted portrait. If these forms occupy an advanced stage within art's historical-conceptual progression, Rush argues, their philosophical interest lies precisely in their place within that longer teleology. Of course, the development of such genres stretches back to Renaissance precedents. Yet the innovation of Northern European painting lies not only in the 'triumph of art over the transitory', but also in the questions it poses about the nature of painterly representation – the self-conscious (which is to say deeply *conceptual*) interrogation of the ontology of art.¹¹⁰ Taking his lead from Hegel, Rush attempts to show how, in Dutch and Flemish painting, this self-consciousness reveals itself in visual terms: what is so special about still-life paintings in particular, he argues, is their examination of how colour and light lend themselves (as indeed, crucially, do *not* lend themselves) to painterly form.

Grootenboer – herself a renowned expert on the still-life paintings that Rush discusses¹¹¹ – takes a different tack. As with the previous chapter, her analysis centres around Hegel's comments on Dutch and Flemish art. Rather than look back to the late sixteenth century, however, Grootenboer introduces a modern case study: *Central Savings*, a photorealistic painting of a Manhattan diner by Richard Estes in 1975 [Fig. 6.1]. Of course, both the subject and form of this image lie beyond the scope of what Hegel could have imagined in the 1820s. But Estes' focus on reflective surfaces – his visually mediated meditation on painterly and photographic representation – richly resonates with Hegel's deliberations on Dutch painting, not least his speculative concern with *das Schein* (at once 'shine' and 'appearance'). As Grootenboer demonstrates, *Central Savings* offers a provocative lens for revisiting Hegelian ideas about romantic art: while figuratively reflecting upon the mimetic strategies of both painting and photography, the physical reflections of Estes' image interrogates the

110 Cf. Hegel 1975, 597–600, esp. 599: 'In other words, apart from the things depicted, the means of the portrayal also becomes an end in itself, so that the artist's subjective skill and his application of the means of artistic production are raised to the status of an objective matter in works of art.' There is an important – albeit unstated – connection here with Schopenhauer's earlier *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (first published in 1819). Likewise, a line can be traced between Hegel's comments and Heidegger's famous discussion of Vincent van Gogh's 'still lifes' in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*: for analysis, cf. Squire 2017, 197–201.

111 Cf. Grootenboer 2005 (with brief reference to Hegel at 143).

very essence of painting – not as something that inheres in material form, or indeed in subject matter, but rather in the capacity to generate thought ('reflections on reflection', as Grootenboer nicely puts it).

The next three chapters – by Robert Pippin, T.J. Clark and Paul A. Kottman – likewise touch upon themes of artistic self-consciousness. At stake in these chapters, though, are Hegelian ideas about the 'modern' – that is, the emergence of new modalities for understanding the world and our place within it. Robert Pippin begins by returning to the medium of painting, as introduced in the chapters by Rush and Grootenboer. What drives the chapter, though, is the Hegelian association between painting and romantic forms of art: what is it about painting that helps us to see – indeed, that makes *visible* – an aspect of modern self-understanding? For Pippin, as for Hegel, the answer to this question pivots around a new-found inwardness [*Innerlichkeit*] of human subjectivity. What is particular about painting is its special capacity to make 'appear' or 'shine' – that key Hegelian verb *scheinen*, once again – a particular aspect of modern self-condition: the supremacy of painting, in other words, has to do with its capacity, quite unrivalled by other visual media, to give form to the 'liveliness' or 'life' of subjectivity.¹¹²

Clark's contribution likewise relates to the modern history of painting. The key difference, however, lies in relating Hegel's comments about romantic painting to the post-Hegelian history of the medium: Clark attempts to trace how painters themselves responded to Hegel's prognosis of modernism as cultural and artistic condition.¹¹³ To what extent

112 This is the reason, it seems, why Hegel suggests that (at least in the framework of the technologies available in the 1820s) the philosophical study of painting requires a different degree of autopsy from that of architecture and painting. 'For architecture and sculpture you can make do, at first, with copies, descriptions, and casts, because in these arts the range of the subject-matter is more restricted, the forms and means of representation are less plentiful and varied, and their particular specific characterisations are simpler and more decisive. Painting demands a sight of the individual works of art themselves; in its case especially mere descriptions are inadequate, however often you have to content yourself with them' (Hegel 1975, 869–870).

113 Cf. above, pp. 34, 38–43. One instance of the reasoning is Hegel 1975, 605–606: since 'bondage to a particular subject-matter and a mode of portrayal suitable for this material alone are for artists today something past', Hegel posits, 'art therefore has become a free instrument which the artist can wield in proportion to his subjective skill in relation to any material of whatever kind'. 'Today there is no material which stands in and for itself above this relativity,

did Hegelian thinking about world and consciousness set an agenda for painting in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? How did artists react to the ‘fractal logic’ (to quote Clark) of the romantic? Indeed, given the ‘devastating, scandalous, astonishing’ implications of Hegel’s thesis, how could artists respond to – and thereby make known through visual form – the modern condition that Hegel diagnosed? In responding to these questions, Clark offers a magisterial overview of the history of European painting between the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: on the one hand, he champions modern art’s extreme epistemological debts to Hegelian thinking; on the other, he argues that the very history of modern painting – stretching from Friedrich to Matisse, and seeping from Germany to France – delivered an evolving response to Hegelian themes of painterly negation.

The discourse of modernism also comes to the fore in Kottman’s contribution. Where the previous two chapters focus on the supreme romantic medium of painting, Kottman throws a literary case study into the mix: the works (and above all *dramatic* works) of William Shakespeare.¹¹⁴ The passage around which the chapter revolves is the epilogue to *The Tempest* (probably written in 1610/1611), in which Prospero – the play’s protagonist, standing in for the literary author himself – declares that ‘Now my charms are all o’erthrown / And what strength I have’s mine own’. What would it mean, Kottman asks, if the first to express the ‘Hegelian’ sentiment that ‘art ... is and remains for us a thing of the past’ were not in fact Hegel, but Shakespeare? Did Hegel recognise the philosophical debt, and hence allude to it at the end of his *Lectures*?¹¹⁵ If so, what might this shared declaration about the belatedness of art help us to understand? For Kottman, the two declarations about art – by Hegel on the one hand, and by Shakespeare on the other – can each shed light on the other. No less importantly, he suggests that a comparative analysis can illuminate the significance

and even if one matter be raised above it, still there is at least no absolute need for its representation by *art*.’

114 Any book on the ‘artworks’ discussed in the *Lectures*, Kottman insists, ought to include a discussion of Shakespeare. According to Hegel, after all, ‘in the portrayal of concretely human individuals and characters it is especially the English who are distinguished masters and above them all Shakespeare stands at an almost unapproachable height’ (Hegel 1975, 1227).

115 Cf. Pippin 2014, 142–143.

of art's 'pastness': the very proximity between the two figures throws a spotlight onto modernism as cultural trait, not only with regards to the cultural and historical parameters of each thinker, but also across time (and by extension with respect to the art produced *after* Hegel's death, up to and including the present day).

The final two chapters, by Ingvil Torsen and Sebastian Gardner, turn to Hegelian philosophies of form, the one from a phenomenological perspective, the other with an eye on intellectual history. Torsen approaches Hegel as a springboard for examining the art of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, concentrating on the artistic subject of the body in particular. For Hegel, as Peters emphasises earlier in the book, the body was the prime subject of classical art, and the very trope of embodiment is associated with sculpture (that is, the supreme medium of classical form); by contrast, as Pippin, Rush, Grootenboer and Clark explore in their earlier chapters, Hegel insists that painting – not sculpture – is the abiding form of the romantic. Many Hegelian-led histories of modernism have consequently concentrated on the development of painting, not least the rise of painterly abstraction.¹¹⁶ But in what ways might the history of sculpture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries nuance (might one even say undermine?) the Hegelian account? Why does the problem of embodiment still captivate modern artists? And how do post-Hegelian explorations of sculptural form complicate Hegel's own characterisation of the romantic? To answer these questions, Torsen attempts to fuse a Hegelian philosophy of art with a more phenomenological approach, above all the work of Merleau-Ponty.

Where Torsen looks forward to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Gardner explores Hegelian ideas about art by turning backwards: his chapter offers a 'rational reconstruction' of Hegelian thinking against its earlier intellectual historical backdrop. A number of contributors to this volume engage with Hegel's so-called 'end of art' hypothesis – the idea that art has lost its higher vocation.¹¹⁷ But what, Gardner asks, is the precise relationship between art and philosophy for Hegel? Must the rise in philosophy's fortune go hand in hand with the demise of art? Indeed, how can a longer view of such intellectual debates – above all in the wake of Kant, and among the likes of Schlegel, Novalis, Schiller, Schelling and Solger – help us to make

¹¹⁶ Cf. above, pp. 43–44.

¹¹⁷ Cf. especially the chapters by Kottman and Clark – and above, pp. 38–43.

sense of Hegel's position? On the one hand, Gardner approaches Hegel's comments about art's loss of vocation as a means of countering 'philosophical Romanticism': rather than form a strict or logical pre-requisite for his history of art-consciousness, Hegel's assertions are prompted by the need to counter the claims of his immediate predecessors and contemporaries. On the other hand, the chapter takes a more macroscopic view, teasing out the implications of this 'end of art' thesis for approaching modern artistic production and the history of aesthetics. Either we must relinquish Hegel's thesis about art's loss of higher vocation (and thereby judge Hegelian aesthetics in much closer association with Romanticism than Hegel himself suggests), Gardner claims. Or else, if Hegel's riposte to Romanticism is sustained, it is necessary to tell a new history of modern painting, above all with a view to the rise of pictorial abstraction: we must think either that late romantic art has lost its vocation, but is either unaware of that fate; or alternatively, in its state of 'unhappy consciousness', that painting *pretends* not to know about its own state of artistic demise.

* * * * *

As this brief overview makes clear, contributors to the volume approach 'the art of Hegel's aesthetics' from a variety of perspectives. There are numerous points of intersection, as indeed of convergence. But the chapters do not offer a uniform response – either in terms of the answers that they derive, or the questions that they pose. This plurality of viewpoints has been fundamental to our project: rather than offer some a last word on Hegel's art history, we set out to stage an intervention – to celebrate their 200th anniversary by allowing the *Lectures* to spur some new sorts of dialogue.

With that plurality in mind, it is left to my co-editor, Paul A. Kottman, to weave some of the book's strands together in the form of a concluding envoi. While contributors adopt a miscellany of approaches to the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Kottman explains, all share an abiding respect for Hegel's ability to get us talking with one another. The sentiment seems an appropriate one on which to end. What Hegel shows us, I think, is the critical shortcomings of so much academic scholarship: to define our field of enquiry in overly narrow (and often narrowly historical) disciplinary terms is to renege on our intellectual duty as *critics*. Ultimately, our hope for this volume is therefore that it will vivify art's claims on our thinking, as indeed on aesthetic criticism as it continues to be practised: the last word, we think, should belong

neither to art nor to philosophy, but to the mutual dependence of each on the other.¹¹⁸

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118 For a related sentiment – within an associated project – cf. Kottman 2017, 22.

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WHITNEY DAVIS

THE ABSOLUTE IN THE MIRROR

Symbolic art and cosmological perspectivism

I take it to be uncontroversial that for many art historians Hegel's art history offers little – beyond fodder for post-colonial critiques (e.g., Buck-Morss 2009; Tibebu 2011) – to the study of arts *outside* the Greco-Roman and Christian-modern western traditions, including the arts of ancient Persia, India and Egypt to which Hegel devoted many words in his *Lectures on Fine Art* and elsewhere. Most present-day historians of the traditions of Asian visual and material cultures, I venture to say, will find that it simply will not wash to take Hegel's view that the 'artistic shapes' of classical Chinese painting, sculpture and ceramics are nothing but 'formlessness' (Hegel 1975, 74).

To be sure, as Benjamin Rutter reminds us, Hegel notoriously 'distinguished art's empirical record from its principled history', his philosophical history of its 'inner and necessary connection[s]' (Rutter 2010, 50).¹ But at the conference out of which this volume arose, the organisers (and the editors of the present volume) asked contributors to reflect on this very issue, among others. In this chapter, then, I propose to explore Hegel's main philosophical-anthropological argument (as partly distinct from any aesthetic prejudice, cultural bias and empirical ignorance) that would exclude most world arts – especially many ancient arts and non-western indigenous traditions of art, of material, spatial and visual culture – from the Hegelian art history of 'the development of the ideal in the particular

¹ As T.M. Knox commented on the relevant passage in the *Lectures on Fine Art*, 'nothing is more striking in Hegel than his dismissal of "purely" historical questions, although history is the guiding thread through all his major works' (in Hegel 1975, 780).

forms of art' (the overall title of part two of Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art* [Hegel 1975, 299]) conceived as the sensuous form of the idea; or if it does not exclude them entirely, classifies them as relatively undeveloped and inadequate. Not all sensuous forms are created equal. Indeed, one stands in mastery over all others. And that will be our problem.

According to Plato (*Laws*, 2.656e–657a), ancient Egyptian art had been governed in the service of showing what 'really is' for 'ten thousand years' by unchanging rules of form and meaning – a stability Plato approved. (Plato knew Egyptian art in small-scale artefacts circulating in the Greek world and in the reports of Greek travellers to Egypt such as Herodotus).² By contrast, Hegel took this adherence to 'static types' (Hegel 1975, 448) to be one main reason why Egyptian art could not fully liberate the human spirit of free subjective individuality struggling to extract itself from nature and its materials; indeed, it is a fundamental principle of Hegel's thought that it is in the very 'nature of spirit', Hegel averred, to follow an 'infinite impulse to alter its forms' (Hegel 1899, 206). Still, as this might suggest, Hegel saw Egyptian art – the third and final phase of what he called 'symbolic art', at the very threshold of 'becoming classical' (Hegel 1975, 780) and indeed in communication with the cultural emergence of classical Greek art – as an art, maybe *the* art, in extreme and potentially productive tension with itself, in a sense belying its inexpressiveness and supposed lack of inwardness [*Innerlichkeit*].³ I agree with H.S. Harris' subtle judgment that, for Hegel, the artistic culture of Egypt was

² For Plato's remarks on Egyptian art, culture and laws, see Davis 1979, with full references to the copious literature; an especially incisive treatment can be found in Froidefond 1971, 326–337. Hegel's main art-historical source, the antiquarian J.J. Winckelmann, cited Plato's account of 'the painted Egyptian statues of his day [that] differed neither in form nor in any other respect from those that were made a thousand or more years before' (Winckelmann 2002, lxi; 2006b, 130). Nevertheless, Winckelmann went on to differentiate earlier and later Egyptian styles – a point about the art history of Egypt that Hegel conveniently overlooked. A conspectus of all the Egyptian and Egyptianising artefacts specifically mentioned by Winckelmann in his *History of the Art of Antiquity* (monuments, sculptures, gems, etc.) can be found in Winckelmann 2006a, 33–70, nos. 1–107; in general, see Syndram 1990, Grimm and Mina Zeni 2004, Grimm and Schoske 2005, with fulsome references.

³ Hegel revised and restructured his account of symbolic art throughout his several series of lectures on aesthetics and fine art between 1820/1821 and 1828/1829 (see Kwon 1992), but nothing I will say will depend in any deep way on attending to these reworkings in fine detail.

a ‘positive development’ for Spirit; it gave Spirit a ‘unique occasion’ – as Hegel saw it – to ‘experience conflict, struggle, and perplexity’, ‘its longing for resolution’, and ‘its confusion in the face of questions’ (Harris 1997, I: 130). To identify this ‘Egyptian’ moment counts as a theoretical contribution to the history of art *sine qua non*. For every art is always somewhat ‘Egyptian’ – indeed, I will suggest, *must* be ‘Egyptian’.

I do not suggest that historians should adopt Hegel’s account of Egyptian art as the historical transition, the ‘middle’, between East and West, between ancient Orient and Greece, and, as he also noted, between Africa and Europe (Hegel 1899, 218; 1975, 326). Egyptian civilisation surprised Hegel because in its supposed ‘African imprisonment of ideas’, its ‘African stupidity’, one nonetheless finds ‘reflective intelligence’ (Hegel 1899, 204). Nonetheless, in his own ideological context Hegel succeeded in identifying a question for the historical phenomenology of all arts worldwide that partly work through seemingly symbolic representations of man and cosmos – namely, the question ‘whether’, as Hegel wrote, ‘what is represented as person has also actual individuality and subjectivity or whether it carries in itself only the empty semblance of the same as mere personification’ (Hegel 1975, 314). For my purposes I will take this to be a valid question, when properly reconstructed. And Hegel’s answer?

In 1820, Hegel visited Dresden, where he saw Raphael’s *Sistine Madonna* of 1512; students later gave him an engraving of it [Fig. 2.1]. In the same year, Baron Johann Heinrich von Minutoli (a military officer encouraged by the Prussian monarchy) began collecting artefacts in Egypt (Minutoli 1824, Pöggeler 1982, 205–21; Karig 1998) – his ‘Aegyptiaca’, which Hegel visited in early May 1823 at its exhibition in Berlin.⁴ As Hegel wrote to his friend Friedrich Creuzer (the great philologist and historian of religion) a few days later, here he could see the ‘most beautiful’ bird and animal mummies; ‘dozens of idols a foot and a half high, [and] hundreds of small ones’; a stela featuring the falcon-headed sun-god Re-Harakhte in his solar boat and worshippers praising the scarab-beetle Khepri, the rising sun [Fig. 2.2], a representation of the kind he described

4 Unfortunately, about one hundred crates – four-fifths of Minutoli’s entire collection – were lost at sea in shipment from Egypt to Hamburg. For the Prussian cultural politics of the collection and display of Egyptian and other antiquities and the formation of new museums in Berlin and elsewhere (including the museum of Egyptian antiquities) – an important matrix for the aesthetic speculations of Hegel and his students – see Pöggeler 1987, Betthausen and Kroll 2016; cf. Squire’s introduction to this volume, pp. 45–46.



2.1 Franz Anton Eric Moritz Steinla, *Sistine Madonna* (engraving after Raphael), c. 1820 (33.5 × 23 cm). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum, Gift of William Gray from the collection of Francis Calley Gray, inv. G3710. © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

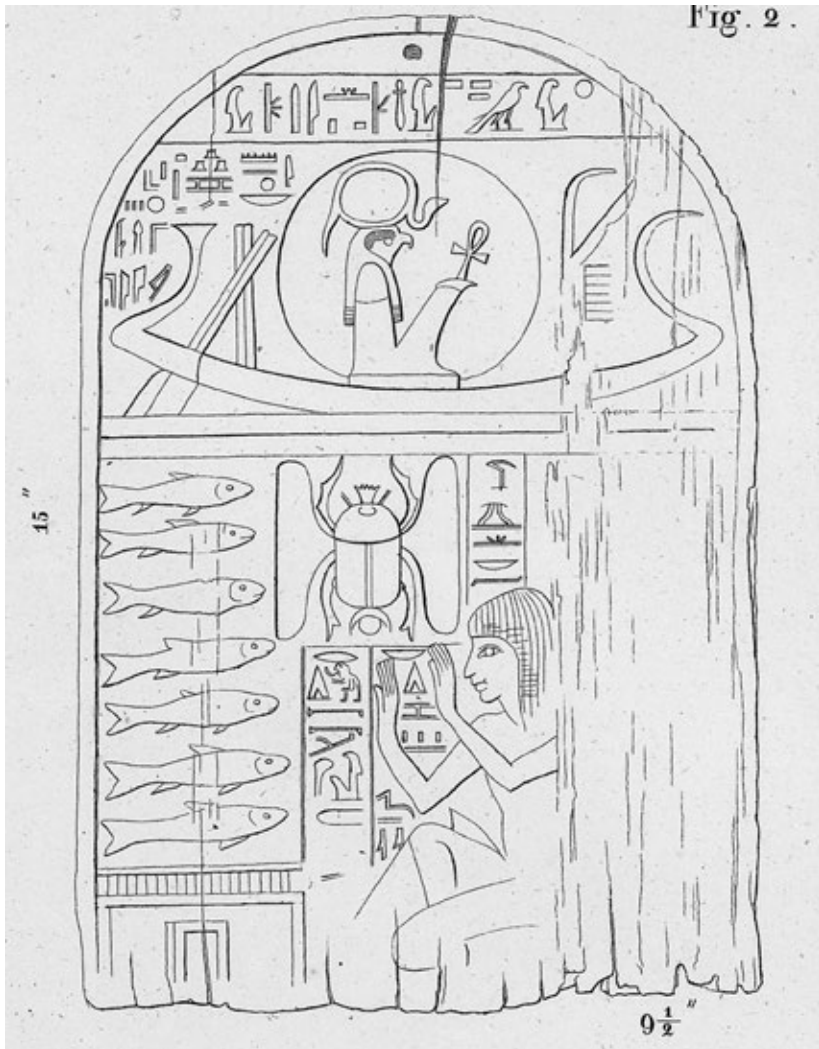
in his lectures on the philosophy of history as ‘hieroglyphical figures ... of falcons, dung-beetles, etc.’ (Hegel 1899, 213); and above all a bronze figurine of the goddess Isis suckling her child Horus, an avatar of the king [Fig. 2.3].⁵ As Hegel went on to say in his lectures on fine art, Isis lacks the *Gemüt*, the ‘heart’, the ‘feeling’, the ‘soulfulness’, of Raphael’s Madonna [Fig. 2.1] – or, to take a different example, the vivacity of the beggar boys (despite their poverty) in Bartolomé Estaban Murillo’s well-known paintings in Munich, which Hegel admired for their ‘full feeling’ of ‘inner freedom’ (Hegel 1975, 170; Hegel referred to *The Grapes and Melon Eaters* of c. 1650 and *Beggar-Boys Playing Dice* of c. 1675–1680, both acquired by the gallery in Munich in 1698). According to Hegel, the Egyptian artisan did not ‘breathe into’ the figure of Isis ‘either the life that the human form otherwise has in reality, or the higher life which can be the vehicle for expressing what the Spirit effects or weaves in these forms now made adequate to it. On the contrary, their works reveal only a rather lifeless seriousness, an undisclosed secret. ... “There is neither goddess, nor mother, nor son, nor god – there is only a physical sign of a thought incapable of emotion or passion”.⁶

As Hegel went on, ‘this [artefact] does precisely mark the breach between meaning and shape [*Bedeutung und Gestalt*] and the inadequate development of the artistic intuition in the Egyptians’ (Hegel 1975, 784). To use a pithy formula he employed in his lectures on the philosophy of history, in Egyptian civilisation and its sculpture, ‘Spirit still has an iron band around its forehead’ (Hegel 1899, 207).

An iron band almost literally speaking. Hegel was much struck by an observation made by the antiquarian Johann Joachim Winckelmann in his *History of the Art of Antiquity* of 1764, Hegel’s principal source for

⁵ For Hegel’s letter to Creuzer, a close colleague during Hegel’s days at the university in Heidelberg, see Hegel 1984, 369–371 (6 May 1823). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore Creuzer’s substantial influence on Hegel’s views of ancient Oriental religions and their symbolism and on Hegel’s emerging account of symbolic art. For key texts of the period, see Berndt and Drügh 2008, and for commentary see Stewart 2014. Beyond Minutoli’s artefact [Fig. 2.3], there are several examples of figurines of *Isis lactans* that were or could have been known to Winckelmann and Hegel; see, for example, Grimm and Schoske 2005, 56–57, no. 33 (Turin), 61, no. 38 (Berlin – formerly collection of Giovanni Pietro Bellori), and 82, no. 61 (Munich).

⁶ Hegel 1975, 784. At the end of the quoted passage, Hegel was citing the antiquarian Desiré-Raoul Rochette’s *Cours d’archéologie* of 1828, though he would modify the term ‘sign’.



2.2 Egyptian painted wooden funerary stele of an unknown person, c. 1330 BC. After Heinrich Freiherr von Minutoli, *Reise zum Tempel des Jupiter Ammon in der Libyschen Wüste und nach Ober-Aegypten in den Jahren 1820 und 1821* (Berlin, 1824), plate 34.2.



2.3 Egyptian bronze statue of Isis suckling the child Horus (*Isis lactans*), probably fourth century BC (height 23.5 cm). Berlin: Ägyptisches Museum, inv. 8286. © bpk Bildagentur / Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin (Preußischer Kulturbesitz; photographer Sandra Steiß) / Art Resource, New York.

descriptions of both Egyptian and Greco-Roman sculpture. In Egyptian sculpture, Winckelmann had written, ‘the eyes are drawn flat and oblique ... almost flush with the forehead’ (Winckelmann 2002, 66–67; 2006b, 133) [Fig. 2.4].⁷ In ideal Greek sculpture, however, the eye is set even deeper than it is in nature: therefore, ‘the forehead protrudes more than it does in nature, the intellectual [*sinnende*] part of the face predominates and its expression of Spirit leaps to the eye more clearly, while strengthened shadow in the orbits give us of itself a feeling of depth and undistracted inner life, blindness to external things, and a withdrawal into the essence of individuality, the depth of which is suffused over the entire figure’ (Hegel 1975, 734).

In Egyptian sculpture, by contrast, ‘the head above all has no expression of spirituality, because animalism prevails and does not allow the Spirit to emerge in independent existence’ (Hegel 1975, 783). Indeed, an Egyptian king or queen (believed to be a god) could take animal form in whole or in part, as in the sphinx of King Senwosret III illustrated here [Fig. 2.5], royal human head on lion’s body. (We know it’s Senwosret not only because it bears an inscription of his name but also because it matches the magnificent sculptural portraits of him [Fig. 2.6].) It is here, perhaps, that the negative way of an eventual sublation of the symbol could open up – the ‘intuition of a secret inner being’, ‘an inkling, in the animal form, of a secret inwardness’ beginning to ‘portray its own inner being’ (Hegel 1975, 357–359). But this requires a moment Hegel could not quite find in Egyptian culture – namely, the moment when animal form, such as King Senwosret’s lion shape, is immediately unriddled to mean nothing less, nothing more and nothing other than free human subjective individuality, as if the lion visibly *is* King Senwosret in his absolute subjective identity. As I have already intimated, this was the very question Hegel put to symbolic art, though he had to answer adversely.

Of course, we are inherently in the domain of riddles and decipherments when the forms of art are assimilated to ‘hieroglyphical figures’,

⁷ Winckelmann referred specifically to the head of a queen or princess in the Villa Albani at his time of writing (now in the Brooklyn Museum), illustrated here as Fig. 2.4; for full discussion see Grimm and Schoske 2005, 152–155. Winckelmann assigned it to the earlier style of Egyptian sculpture; it is now dated more precisely to the reign of King Amenemhet II in the Twelfth Dynasty (c. 1990–1800 BC). Ironically, at an exhibition in 2000 it was included among other putative exemplifications of the ‘birth of the individual’ in the Twelfth Dynasty (Wildung 2000, 90–91, fig. 28).



2.4 Green chlorite head of an Egyptian female sphinx, Twelfth Dynasty, c. 1876–1842 BC (38.9 × 33.3 × 35.4 cm). Brooklyn Museum: Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, inv. 56.85 (formerly in the Villa Albani, Rome). Image courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum.



2.5 Egyptian gneiss sphinx of King Senwosret III, possibly from Karnak, Thebes, c. 1870–1840 BC (42.5 × w. 29.5 × 73 cm). New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Edward S. Harkness, inv. 1917.9.2. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



2.6 Egyptian red quartzite portrait of King Senwosret III, c. 1870–1840 BC (16.5 × 12.6 × 11.4 cm). New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Edward S. Harkness, inv. 1926.7.1934. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

albeit hieroglyphics that supposedly cannot be fully read by their own makers. (Needless to say, Hegel was neither the first philosopher nor the last to find a ‘constitutive incomprehensibility’, a ‘constitutive moment of opacity’, to be essential to the ‘condition of possibility’ of art as such, as Jay Bernstein has put it in commenting on Theodor W. Adorno’s account of the ‘enigmaticalness’ of art (Bernstein 2007, 237; cf. Adorno 1997, 120).) Hieroglyphs are signs, and when Hegel was writing the Egyptian hieroglyphs were being correctly read for the first time; Jean-François Champollion’s *Panthéon égyptien*, a fulsome lexicography and iconography of the Egyptian gods, appeared in the same year Hegel visited the Minutoli collection.⁸ But the partly *undecipherable* ‘hieroglyphical figures’ are *symbols*, an expression (*Ausdruck*) that ‘indicates a meaning (*Bedeutung*) it does not actually contain’ (Magnus 2001, 115): necessarily, ‘meaning and shape present, equally with their affinity, their mutual externality, foreignness, and incompatibility’ (Hegel 1975, 300, 305). It is for this structural reason that the symbol – and therefore symbolic art – inevitably defeats the mind, wherever it searches. (In this, as David James argues, Hegel’s concept of symbolic art has affinities with – and perhaps takes from – Kant’s concept of the mathematical sublime (James 2009, 7–17).) On the one side, the ‘meaning’ is ‘measureless [in fact, ‘sublime’] ... and cannot find in concrete appearance any specific form corresponding completely with this abstraction and universality’ (Hegel 1975, 305). And on the other side, the forms, the shapes, merely proliferate the ‘abstract determinacy ... equally well in infinitely many other configurations’ (Hegel 1975, 305). Unbounded morphological productivity in the particulars is the reciprocal of the unavailability of their universal to absolutely clear conception. (Perhaps one might have advised Hegel to leave his entire philosophy of art just there.)

⁸ See Iversen 1971 for a full review of European theories (from classical antiquity to the time of Champollion’s decipherment) of the allegorical status of hieroglyphic pictographs as a sacred writing of ideas. Hegel’s vision of Egypt as a ‘middle’, as ‘becoming classical’, was driven partly by his awareness – in the wake of Champollion’s decipherment – that hieroglyphs were not exclusively pictographic, based on ‘only the sensuous image, not the letter itself’, as he once mistakenly said (Hegel 1899, 199), but were also partly phonetic – a writing on its way to ‘the “Greek/German” into which Hegel translated the inscription on the Temple of Neith at Saïs’ (Derrida 1986, 256). Influential treatments of Hegel’s theory of signs and symbols can be found, not surprisingly, in Derrida 1982 and de Man 1982.

The upshot, as Hegel sees it, is paradoxical. The symbol itself is ‘essentially ambiguous’ – abstract meaning *indeterminate*; particular expression *underdetermined*. The symbol, then, is quite unlike the *simile*, in which both sides can be determinately named in a comparison: king is *like* lion, as distinct from king *as* lion. This is straightforward enough. But Hegel went on to extract a subtle conclusion. The ambiguity as such creates a primal doubt, pervasive and persistent, about whether a symbol is *present to the mind in the very first instance*. ‘In the picture of a lion there confronts us not only the meaning which it may have as a symbol, but also this visible shape and existent’ (Hegel 1975, 306). And for many beholders ‘it remains *every time doubtful* whether they have to content themselves with what confronts them or whether thereby they are referred to still other ideas and thoughts’ (Hegel 1975, 308, my italics). The original historical moment of mind in working in art, then, and even though it is ultimately just a ‘mere attempt’, a ‘*Vorkunst*’ or ‘pre-art’ (Hegel 1975, 303), is to adopt the ‘standpoint of the symbol proper’, as the Egyptians did unconsciously – where ‘shapes stand before us as problems, as making the demand that we shall conjecture the inner meaning lying in them’ (Hegel 1975, 320).

But an obvious question arises. Why would anyone adopt ‘the standpoint of the symbol proper’, however unconsciously, when that standpoint must always defeat the mind, leaving it, as Hegel says, ‘wandering among problems’ (Hegel 1975, 308), framed by the primal problem I have identified – the unavoidable doubt whether there *is* a problem in the very first place? Now that we can read hieroglyphs, maybe *we* are constrained to adopt the standpoint of the symbol about the whole array of dubiously (un)readable ‘hieroglyphical figures’ to be found in Egyptian iconography, such as the stela in the Minutoli collection that Hegel had seen [Fig. 2.2]. But why would the *Egyptians* need to adopt said standpoint for themselves, or even be drawn into it unconsciously by an inexorable order of thought? After all, Hegel admits – one of the more extraordinary concessions, circularities and potentially catastrophic self-contradictions in his art history – the ‘shapes presenting themselves’ actually ‘might have been clear and intelligible as a meaning to the insight of the Egyptians themselves’ (Hegel 1975, 360). Except they weren’t – because they were symbols.

The most general answer to the question – why should the *symbol-shape* jump-start the history of art, what the mind accomplishes overall in history in working in ‘sensuous forms of the idea’? – therefore proleptically must invoke the entire world history Hegel set forth for the threefold

development of the ideal in the particular forms of art (that is, symbolic, classical and romantic art). Beginning always at the negative pole (see Hegel 1975, 347, 351), and as Kathleen Dow Magnus has written, ‘by working itself through various oppositions of form and content [initially in symbols], spirit tests the extent of its identity with nature and discovers its difference from it’, leading to a more precise conception of this very idea (Magnus 2001, 121). But there is a more particular and local answer too.

We are not sure if a sign, a figure, a form-shape, a configuration present to us, *is* a symbol – primal doubt. Still, as Hegel puts it, ‘there are configurations which reveal in themselves at once that they are not merely chosen to display *themselves* alone, but that they are meant to hint at meanings that lie deeper and are more comprehensive’ (Hegel 1975, 352, italics in original). These, we can say, are ‘the simple [the very] image’ [*das einfache Bild*] of symbolism (Hegel 1975, 359), indeed ‘symbols of symbol’ – and Egypt was their native land, which ‘posed to itself the spiritual task of self-deciphering [*der Selbstentzifferung*] without really achieving the deciphering’ (Hegel 1975, 456–457) because the symbols Egypt made are opaque in their very nature. As we have seen, they are opaque in their essential cognitive or semiotic nature (as distinct from mere displays, signs and similes) and in their epistemological status (in primal doubt that frames ambiguity that produces incomprehensibility). But they are also opaque in a literal sense: Egyptian symbols endow nature with just enough spirituality (or spirituality of just the right form-shape) to raise the question experienced by the mind as a riddle. Overall, then, there are *two* doubts framing the passage of Spirit through the forms of symbolic art: doubt about the presence of symbol; doubt about the symbol of presence. I have considered the first. Now I move to the second.

In his sections in the *Lectures on Fine Art* on symbolic art in Egypt, repeated in his lectures on the philosophy of history and the philosophy of religion, Hegel says the same thing over and over again. Within the Egyptian standpoint of the symbol, the expressions [*Gestaltungen, Ausdrücke*] are technically well made, bespeaking the reflective intelligence of craft labour – of the master artisan, *der Werkmeister*, described in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 1977, 421–424; for comments, see Forster 1998, 310–311, and Stewart 2000, 401–402). But even though ‘everything in the ordinary daylight is well organized’ by craft labour, there is ‘no “inner light”’ (Harris 1997, I: 565): meanings [*Bedeutungen, Sinne*] are ‘variously confused and sundered abstractions of the life of nature, intermingled with thoughts of the actuality of spirit’ (Hegel 1975, 637); form is ‘not homogeneous with that content’ (Hegel 1975, 317) but instead ‘a

continuing struggle for compatibility' (Hegel 1975, 317), an 'enigmatic unity still undivided and fermenting in this contradictory linkage' (Hegel 1975, 318), 'laboring ceaselessly to render its idea visible to itself, to bring into clearness, into consciousness, what it inwardly is' (Hegel 1895, II: 109), and only 'beginning to wrest its way out of the natural' (Hegel 1975, 350). 'The more enigmatical and obscure it is to itself, so much the more does it feel the impulse to labor to deliver itself ... and to gain a clear objective view of itself': such is the 'mighty taskmaster' of the 'impulse to comprehend' (Hegel 1899, 214).

Egyptian funerary practices, Egyptian architecture and Egyptian writing – all these Hegel reviews in these terms. But above all it was the *theriomorphism* of a good deal of Egyptian art that strikes him, and to some extent demands – motivates – his application of the logic of the symbol in the first place, though in the sequence of argument such logic had ostensibly been set forth as the *a priori* frame for describing symbolic art as such, as well as its subsequent sublations. I need only cite Hegel's remarks on such symbols as the human-bodied god with a jackal's head, Anubis god of embalmers (Hegel took him to be a human priest wearing an animal mask – specifically a dog's) (Hegel 1975, 355–361; Hegel 1899, 210) and the many sphinxes, with a leonine body and the human head of a king or queen [Fig. 2.5]. 'The sphinx may be regarded as a symbol of the Egyptian Spirit. The human head looking out from the brute body exhibits Spirit as it begins to emerge from the merely Natural – to tear itself loose therefrom and already to look more freely around it, without, however, entirely freeing itself from the fetters Nature had imposed' (Hegel 1899, 199).

Or as Hegel said in the *Lectures on Fine Art*, 'the hidden meaning – the Spiritual – emerges as a human face from the brute ... But conversely, the human form is also disfigured by a brute face' (Hegel 1975, 213). 'Out of the dull strength and power of the animal the human spirit tries to push itself forward, without coming to a perfect portrayal of its own freedom and animated shape, because it must still remain confused and associated with what is other than itself' (Hegel 1975, 361).

By contrast, in the 'free and animated' form of a human being, 'free individuality constitutes the content and form of the representation'. 'For the person is what is significant for himself and is his own self-explanation ... [T]he whole range of his spiritual and visible appearance has no other meaning but the person who, in this development and unfolding of himself, brings before our contemplation only himself as master over his entire objective world' (Hegel 1975, 313).

As Jon Stewart nicely puts it, then, ‘The Sphinx sheds its pelt and tail; its paws are transformed into hands and feet; it stands upright and is metamorphised into the Greek sculpture of the god as self-conscious Spirit’ (Stewart 2000, 407; see Fig. 2.11).⁹ Indeed, as Hegel says with utter finality, ‘the human soul has its peculiar organs, and the body of a brute cannot be its domicile’ (Hegel 1899, 216).

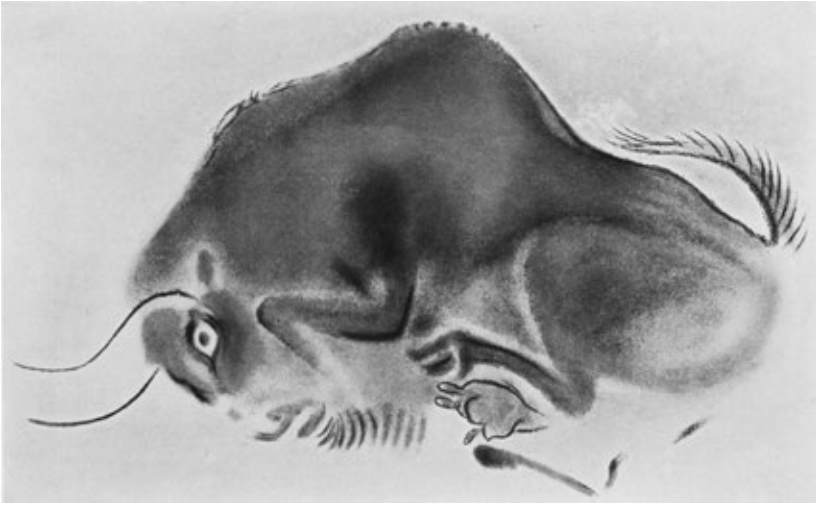
So here we are in world art history according to Hegel: ‘The body of a brute cannot be the domicile’ of Spirit recognising itself as free individuality – as ‘person significant for himself and his own self-explanation’? Oh, really? Why not? Writers prior to Hegel, notably Johann Gottfried Herder, entertained the notion of *Seelenwanderung*, the transmigration of souls (see Herling 2006). And Hegel knew from his ancient Greek source, the geographer and historian Herodotus (*Histories* 2.123), that the Egyptians believed in the ‘metempsychosis’ of human souls into animal complements after death (actually they did not – but no matter), which became objects of ‘contemplation and veneration’. They treated the ‘soul’, then, ‘Spirit – as an affirmative being, though only abstractedly affirmative’ (Hegel 1899, 216), by which Hegel could be taken to mean that the animal form of the deceased Egyptian person was not adequately or appropriately ensouled and incarnated but instead simply symbolised some such abstract meaning as ‘life of the soul after death’, perhaps ‘immortality’. Indeed, Hegel says, ‘the transmigration of souls is ... an abstract idea, and physiology should have made it one of its chief propositions that life in its development had necessarily to proceed to the human form as the one and only sensuous appearance appropriate to spirit’ (Hegel 1975, 78).¹⁰

⁹ As H.S. Harris writes in *Hegel's Ladder*, in the sphinx and such other therianthropomorphic figures as Anubis, ‘the solution of the riddle [of the symbol] is there before our eyes. The God’s shape [i.e., as having a human head] tells us that she thinks, just as we do. Why should her language not be ours? She does not have a dog’s head now, or the head of an ape. So her language ought to be ours. Alongside the sculptor there must stand someone who knows how to express our communal thoughts as thoughts. ... The stone symbolizes the perpetuity of Absolute Spirit. But by giving it a human form, the sculptor has expressed the clear consciousness that it is our Spirit. He has made its bodily shape. A craftsman of a new kind must now make its human voice’ (Harris 1997, I: 556).

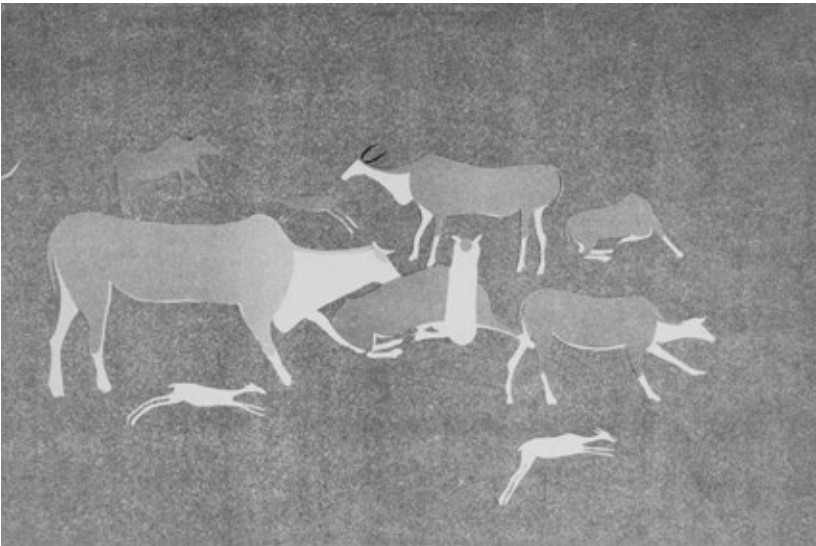
¹⁰ As Knox comments following Hegel’s English translator Bernard Bosanquet, the idea of transmigration ‘is abstract because it represents the soul as independent of an appropriate body – the human soul as capable of existing in a

But we can set metempsychosis aside. In his commentary on Hegel's introduction to the *Lectures on Fine Art*, Michael Inwood writes that 'to see the Absolute as a bison is, in Hegel's view, as disorienting as seeing a bison when one looks in the mirror' (Inwood in Hegel 1993, xix). (By 'mirror', one means Hegel's *Gegenschein*, 'counter-appearance' or 'reflected appearance': 'becoming conscious and becoming aware of other things are not two distinct activities ... One sees oneself as it were reflected off the world as off a mirror' (Inwood in Hegel 1993, xix).) But when King Senwosret III looked in his mirror and saw a lion [Fig. 2.5], or a Magdalenian clan leader looked in his mirror and saw a bison [Fig. 2.7] (see Raphael 1945, Clottes and Lewis-Williams 1996), or a San shaman looked in his mirror and saw an eland [Fig. 2.8] (see Lewis-Williams 1981), or an Olmec warrior prince looked in his mirror and saw a jaguar

beast's body' (Knox in Hegel 1975, 78, referring to Bosanquet in Hegel 1886, 185). Therefore Hegel tautologically has to qualify transmigration as a process *within* the anthropic register in order to reach the sense he intends – that is, 'the human form as the *one and only* sensuous appearance *appropriate* to spirit' (my italics). Even if the Egyptians worshipped ensouled animals, 'metamorphoses entail essentially a negative tendency against nature, a tendency to make animals and inorganic forms into a presentation of the degradation of man' (Hegel 1975, 448). (Compare Hegel 1975, 650–651, on the 'imperfect preservation of spiritual individuality ... when it is maintained that the deceased has for 3,000 years to go through the whole series of animals inhabiting land, water, and air, and only thereafter migrate into a human body again' – as Herodotus had reported of the Egyptians' supposed belief). Perhaps it is awkward for Hegel's thesis that, as Herodotus says, certain *Greek* philosophers adopted the Egyptian idea of transmigration; both Orphic and Pythagorean thinkers were widely thought to teach the doctrine (Hegel 1899, 216; cf. Nilsson 1955, 691). Regardless of Greek practice, according to Hegel the worship of animals is 'repugnant' to Spirit fully self-conscious of itself and of its adequate representation in sensuous forms of its idea of itself – that is, for *us* in the Christian, scientific and modern world (Hegel 1975, 357). Lest we suppose that Hegel's view was superseded by Egyptological and other experts, I note that one of the most creative interpreters of ancient Egyptian religion in the mid-twentieth century, Henri Frankfort, a follower of Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms and sometime Director of the Warburg Institute, opened his inquiry into Egyptian religion by asserting that its pantheon of 'sacred animals' is its 'most baffling, most persistent, and *to us* most alien feature'; in its plethora of 'unorganic and mechanical' symbols, '*it makes no difference* whether a quadruped's head, an ibis' neck, or a snake's forepart emerges from the human shoulder' (Frankfort 1948, 8, 12, italics mine). These lines could have been written by Hegel.



2.7 Painted relief of a bison from the Cave of Altamira, Magdalenian, c. 15,000 BC (pastel copy by Henri Breuil). After H. Breuil and É. Carthailac, *La caverne d'Altamira* (Monaco: 1906), plate 25.



2.8 Southern San painting from Catherine's Post Caves (Cape Colony in South Africa), nineteenth century. After M. Helen Tongue, *Bushman Paintings* (Oxford: 1909), plate 11.



2.9 Olmec jadeite were-jaguar mask, tenth–sixth century BC (17.1 × 16.5 cm). New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Alice K. Bache, inv. 1977.187.33. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

[Fig. 2.9] (see Coe 1965, Davis 1977), were they disoriented, merely ‘wandering among problems’?¹¹

11 I should make it clear that I am not proposing or defending any particular anthropology or iconography of Egyptian, Magdalenian, Olmec and San representations of animals; there are several and sometimes conflicting interpretations of each of the cultural traditions mentioned. But the general thesis that they relay information about and imaginations of human relations is so widespread (for example, ‘in African cultures animals and their associated qualities provide apt metaphors for human identity and social relationships’ (Roberts 1995, 104)) as to be almost cliché. For a range of case studies, see Morphy 1989.

Inwood gives several reasons why art, according to Hegel, 'should especially portray human beings'. For one thing, the bison's mind (as we suppose at any rate) does not contain and cannot constitute templates, schemas or types of things with general features, as does a human mind (which is therefore capable of what David Summers [2003] has called 'abstraction to the notional'), however much the *Egyptian* mind struggled to attach abstract ideas and particular forms. For another thing, the bison, Inwood thinks, is 'fairly inexpressive' (to our eyes at any rate) and suggests no inner life, let alone *Gemüt*, and therefore cannot be an 'appropriate counterpart to man himself'. Moreover, only a human being, not a bison, can make an *image* of a bison or *symbolise* a bison (in Hegel's terms, animals are 'sensing' creatures, not 'representing' ones (Pinkard 2012, 27–30)). Most generally, 'since the relation between the Absolute, conceived as the inner depth of the world, and man is the relation between the Absolute in itself and its consciousness of itself, and since, among the entities in the world, only man is self-conscious, the Absolute as a whole, and not simply its explicitly human phase, is seen on the model of a human being' (all quotations from Inwood, in Hegel 1993, xvi–xix).

Still, and as I am suggesting, the more self-assured this account has become (perhaps it has been the *most* self-assured in Hegel's art history), the less it accommodates a worldwide anthropology of art – and the more it relays what might be called an 'indigenous ontology' of the western world, despite Hegel's great interest in (and in his context his deep knowledge of) non-western religions and their traditions of symbolism. (Since Hegel's day, many archaeologies, anthropologies and histories have been proposed, following what Marshall Sahlins calls 'the native anthropology of western society, [its] indigenous conceptions of human existence' (Sahlins 1994, 395); Sahlins himself refers specifically to Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* (Mintz 1958).) The world history of art, and more generally of culturally specific symbolic forms, encounters many different indigenous ontologies of the distribution of self-aware subjectivity and of reciprocities and exchanges of perspectives among all creatures that have the capacity to occupy a point of view, to say 'I'. And in this world history the Absolute is *not* always seen on the model of a human being *even if* it is the inner depth of the world counter-reflecting the inner depth of humanity. The bison, the lion, the jaguar or the jackal is – perhaps collectively *are* – the Absolute, as apprehended *as* and *by* a subjectivity that does not always display human shape. And the form of a human being stands to this Absolute not as jackal-headed Anubis [Fig. 2.10] stands to the Greek statue of an athlete in a fully human shape [Fig. 2.11], that is,

as merely ‘becoming classical’ insofar as the Greek statue supposedly has fully liberated the human (including its capacity to represent its own inwardness) from the animal that is other to it. Rather, the form of a human being stands to the Absolute as the Greek sculpture of a human being in human shape [Fig. 2.11] stands to jackal-headed Anubis (a personage frequently depicted in the Greco-Roman tradition itself, and in ‘classical’ style) [Fig. 2.12], that is, as ‘becoming symbolic’ (and self-consciously known to itself as such).¹² This form struggles to wrest itself free of the natural material that is the *human body*, opaque and enigmatic to itself, despite its putative self-consciousness – perhaps the least-comprehended of all the natural things Spirit might comprehend. It seeks to realise the subjective individuality of jackal-god (or of lion-king [Fig. 2.5], or bison-chief [Fig. 2.7], or were-jaguar [Fig. 2.9] or eland-shaman [Fig. 2.8]) that might be the true inner spiritual life of that body, counter-reflected in the world.

I have plunged into deep waters. In order to reconcile the anthropocentric narrative given by Hegel to cultural traditions of the self-recognition of theriomorphic individuality and subjectivity with which I have counterposed it – perhaps a supplement, perhaps a complement, perhaps a contradiction – we would have to make several adjustments in Hegel’s aesthetics. At the most elementary, and for one thing, we would have to jettison Hegel’s view of animals (both in nature and as represented in works of art) as ‘inexpressive’ – as not showing inner life. It is telling that Hegel himself was not certain on this very point. On the one hand, animals, he says, ‘are exceedingly quick and discerning in pursuing the ends of their existence, while they are at the same time silent and

12 We might wonder whether Hegel knew about such artefacts. Winckelmann certainly did: he knew the white marble Anubis with a caduceus (an Anubis-Hermes) in the Capitoline Museum (now in the Museo Gregoriano Egizio of the Musei Vaticani: Fig. 2.12) – ‘not a work of Egyptian art but ... made at the time of Hadrian’ (it was found in Antium in 1749) (Winckelmann 2000, 73; 2006b, 134). More generally, Winckelmann devoted a section of his treatise to Egyptianising sculpture of Hadrianic vintage, which he considered to be a ‘third style’ of Egyptian sculpture after the ‘earlier’ and ‘later’ styles of pharaonic sculpture (Winckelmann 2000, 87–92; 2006b, 139–142). Egyptianising figures of Antinous, the beloved of the emperor Hadrian and deified by him after the young man drowned in the Nile, are distinguished by the fact that the ‘eyes do not lie – as in nature and in the earliest Egyptian heads – on almost the same plane as the eye sockets; instead, they are deeply recessed in the Greek artistic manner’ (Winckelmann 2000, 86–87; 2006b, 140).



2.10 Egyptian plaster and painted wood statuette of Anubis, Ptolemaic Period (42.3 × 10.1 × 20.7 cm). New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Myron C. Taylor, inv. 1938.5. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



2.11 Roman marble copy of Polyclitus' *Diadumenos* (youth tying a fillet around his head); first century AD, after Polyclitus' fifth-century BC original bronze statue (height 184.5 cm). New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, inv. 1925.78.56. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



2.12 Egyptian marble statue of Anubis holding the caduceus of Hermes, first or second century AD (height 155 cm). Rome: Museo Gregoriano Egizio, inv. 76. © Scala / Art Resource, New York.

shut up within themselves; we cannot make out what “possesses” them’ (Hegel 1899, 211). On the other hand, Hegel acknowledged (following Winckelmann) that symbolic art in Egypt treated animals ‘with much understanding, with an elegant multiplicity of softly changing outlines and fluid transitions between separate parts’ (Winckelmann 2002, 67; 2006b, 132), quite different from the ‘forced and stiff’ representation of human bodies (Hegel 1975, 782–783). Wasn’t this to say, then, that what ‘possesses’ the animal was rather *more* comprehensible to human subjectivity than less – that in a sense figurations of animals were *more* human than representations of human beings in human form?

For another thing, we might give more emphasis than has been usual in most of the commentaries to Hegel’s obscure remark in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that the Understanding, despite having developed from prior conditions of awareness in Sense-Certainty and Perception, should not be ‘primitively identified as exclusively human’ (as H.S. Harris points out): nonhuman creatures can instinctively produce their ‘*Vorstellung*, being-for-self spelled out [*herausgesetzt*] in the form of an object’, such as the hives of the bees (Harris 1997, I: 559). In describing the development of the Understanding, Hegel’s basic argument is not so much that the Understanding (as such) primevally and in today’s world is *human*, or not. His argument is more narrow: only human Understanding becomes self-conscious, reflective and rational, and not at all times at that. (Egyptian symbolic understanding is unconscious, its reflectiveness is partial and its rationality, if any, is merely that of the master-craftsman.) But if animals are ‘exceedingly quick and discerning in pursuing the ends of their existence’, can they not be regarded as rational? And if we cannot tell what ‘possesses’ an animal, how do we know it is not self-conscious? Indeed, in many indigenous ontologies around the world it is known that animals *are* self-conscious – because actually *they are not primally and originally animals at all*.

This takes me, finally, to the propositions of the contemporary anthropology now often known as ‘cosmological perspectivism’, identified with the work (and to cite only a selection of foundational writings from the 1980s and 1990s) of Pascal Boyer (1993), Robert Brightman (1993), Jon Crocker (1985), Philippe Descola (1986), Signe Howell (1996), Tim Ingold (1991, 1994), Ann Osborn (1990), Bernard Saladin d’Anglure (1989) and perhaps above all Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1998a, 1998b). (To be sure, these writers are very diverse, deal with many different cultural traditions and situations, and can disagree both on points of ethnographic interpretation and on matters of analysis and theory; greatly simplifying,

I briefly extract what I need for the purposes of this chapter.) Accounts of cosmological perspectivism have been developed most robustly with respect to the indigenous ontologies of traditional societies in Melanesia, the circumpolar arctic, Amazonia and the northwest coast of North America. But it has also made sense of many other societies with shamanistic cultures and/or ‘venatic ideologies’ (Viveiros de Castro 1998a) – that outlook or perspective of human hunters in which ‘animals are perceived and/or conceptually construed as autonomous, bodily subjects and agents’ (Århem 2015, 298).

A culture with the ontology of cosmological perspectivism thinks not that people, humans with cultures and spiritualities, are animals. It thinks that *animals are people*, that is, persons, and ‘appear to [themselves] as human’ with cultures, individualities and spiritualities (Viveiros de Castro 1998a, 13). In the languages and classifications of these ontologies, usually there is no collective category ‘The Animal’ or ‘Animals’, no ‘Nature’, as in Hegel’s ontology. Instead, the world contains the many peoples in their many shapes having the many species of subjective outlooks that make up life in the cosmos – a florid ‘multinaturalism’ that dwarfs the most global ‘multiculturalism’ found by anthropology in the cognitive and communicative life of subjects who have specifically human shape. And all these multinatural peoples have views of one another *as fellow subjects* (Viveiros de Castro uses the term ‘subject’ advisedly) having the capacity to occupy a point of view – to say ‘I’ in relation to the other, in relation to the world comprehended as the world of its own understanding at its Absolute, and in relation to itself self-reflexively apprehending these relations to putative alterity. (In this multinatural world, and to quote H.S. Harris’ summation of Hegel’s view of the world of self-consciousness, there would be ‘a community of communities that do things differently, and a communication system in which all parties recognize both the legitimacy of this, and the “freedom” that is involved in it’ (Harris 1997, I: 564).) In the trans-American myth cycles compiled by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Mythologiques* (e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1969), ‘the original common condition of both humans and animals is not animality, but rather humanity’ (Viveiros de Castro 1998a, 56). As Descola writes, ‘the common point of reference for all beings of nature is not humans as a species but humanity as a condition’ (Descola 1986, 101): the condition that accepts for itself its forms in ‘animal’ and ‘human’ bodies as might be, as all their own among all the peoples, all the humanities reflected to themselves off the world – the jaguar and the peccary, the wolf and the deer, the lion and the man. Of course, we might say (following Inwood

explicating Hegel) that it is only the man-animal – the symbol-making animal – who produces the representation in which the jaguar says ‘I’ to the man who also says ‘I’, using his symbol of all the self-conscious free individual subjective perspectives of all the persons among the peoples, human in form or not, who think ‘I’ and the other as absolutely as I do. But evidently the man-animal does not always need to believe this idea (and indeed perhaps he rarely has), or always needs to act within its ontological frame – Hegel notwithstanding. To the indigenous western ontology crystallised by Hegel, deep cosmological perspectivism must seem enigmatic, almost incomprehensible and indecipherable, especially when it means understanding what the god-creature says [e.g., Figs. 2.4, 2.5, 2.10 and 2.12] in its partly nonhuman person as Absolute. But again, is it really ‘wandering among problems’?

Whether or not a symbolic art relays a cosmologically perspectivist ontology in the strictest ethnographic sense (Olmec and San arts probably do), its theriomorphisms and therianthropies would seem to open a route to the Absolute – or at any rate to self-consciousness of itself as adequate for self-recognitions – no different in kind or degree from the supposed explicit anthropomorphism of classical art. Indeed, the point is not that anthropomorphism, or at any rate a *naturalistic* anthropomorphism, intrinsically enables greater self-consciousness of free subjective individuality. The point is rather that the ‘inwardness’ of self-consciousness, of perspective, cannot *not* be symbolised in art insofar as art (*qua* art) must operate, as Hegel claims, exclusively in the ‘sensuous form’ of such interiority – whether the symbolic form takes the shape of a human being or a nonhuman person or a god or an animal brute or, as seems most likely to me, always already a hybrid of all of the above, regardless of the merely apparent shape, the presentation. Symbolic art, then, is not *Vorkunst* at all. Rather, it is something like art-as-such, *Kunst-an-sich*, along with the other ostensibly succeeding and ostensibly more advanced (post-‘symbolic’) developments of the particular forms of the ideal in classical art and romantic art, and (as Hegel recognised) dialectically framing their very conditions of possibility: ‘spirit’s symbolic experience actually *conditions* and *completes* its self-determining activity’ (Magnus 2001, 3, italics in original). And one might be tempted to say that the more art tries to seem *nonsymbolic* – which is simply to naturalise the symbol in, say, the illusion that an anthropomorphic shape simply indexes a human subjectivity – the more it is ‘wandering among problems’, confused not by the fair doubt whether it *is* a symbol, a personification when it represents all the peoples in human shape or not, but by the false dogma that it *cannot* be one.

Hegel was right to install doubt, uncertainty and unknowing about the very presence of the symbol at the heart of his art history, that is, at its dialectical beginning in the operations of the Understanding relative to Sense-Certainty and Perception. Human beings are divided from themselves *as* symbol-making creatures – especially when they need to symbolise such abstractions as free subjectivity individuality in the domicile of a human body. Hegel wandered among problems, however, when his treatment of symbolic art reduced that constitutive division (the division with which his dialectic of Spirit in art properly begins, that is, with the ‘symbol in general’ [Hegel 1975, 303–314]) to the division of meaning and shape *in* the symbol supposedly to be overcome in the world-historical unfolding of art. That very division of meaning and shape has always let us see the far more absolute fact that we made it.

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JULIA PETERS

HEGEL ON SPIRIT, NATURE AND THE FUNCTION OF CLASSICAL ART

It marks an interesting development in Hegel scholarship in recent years that defenders of what is often called a non-metaphysical reading of Hegel's conception of Spirit [*Geist*] – according to which Spirit for Hegel is the totality of our historically evolving and socially embedded normative practices and institutions – have increasingly begun to address the question of how Spirit, understood in this way, relates to nature in Hegel's view. What is remarkable is that this question is, at least on the face of it, a metaphysical or ontological one. Accordingly, it has triggered an extensive debate about the ontological status of Spirit and its relation to nature. Even more remarkably perhaps, commentators who have participated in this debate have in general leaned towards reading Hegel as a naturalist of sorts.¹ To be sure, Hegel cannot be considered a reductive naturalist. Rather, as has been pointed out by a number of interpreters, in order to understand the sense in which Hegel's conception of Spirit can count as naturalist, we need to appreciate that Hegel's philosophy of Spirit is deeply indebted to Aristotle, in particular to the Aristotelian conception of soul in *De Anima*.² We will then be able to see that Hegel embraces a form of *hylomorphism* according to which the normative practices which are constitutive of Spirit cannot operate independently of some natural substrate: the persons which engage in these practices are necessarily, at the same time, naturally embodied creatures. Hegel can be considered a naturalist in this weak, non-reductive sense.

¹ See for instance Pippin 2008, Pinkard 2012 and McCumber 2014 – and several contributions to Stern 2013.

² For extensive discussion, see Wolff 1992; for a more general discussion of Hegel's relation to Aristotle, see Ferrarin 2001.

Nevertheless, anyone familiar with the letter of Hegel's mature philosophy of Spirit as presented in his *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* may be surprised that it should be possible to ascribe any naturalistic leanings to Hegel at all. After all, in this text Hegel never tires of repeating that it is essential to Spirit that it takes some kind of negative attitude towards nature: the *telos* of Spirit is to liberate itself from nature, even to negate nature. In the following chapter, I want to look at how two prominent defenders of a non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's notion of Spirit understand this claim, and in particular why it is in their view compatible with reading Hegel as a naturalist of sorts. I shall take this discussion as my starting point for raising anew, against the background of these influential readings, the question of how Spirit relates to nature in Hegel's view. It will not be my aim to criticise the readings under consideration, but rather to emphasise an aspect of Hegel's understanding of Spirit's relation to nature which is implicitly acknowledged by them, but which has received comparatively little attention, even though it is, as I shall suggest, of great significance. I shall then make the somewhat unorthodox suggestion that we can learn more about this aspect of Hegel's view by looking at his philosophy of art, and in particular at his account of classical art. Hegel's theory of classical art, I want to demonstrate, is a major source for tracing Hegel's conception of the relation between Spirit and nature.

SPIRIT AND ITS LIBERATION FROM NATURE

In his influential recent book *Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life*, Terry Pinkard gives the following summary of what constitutes a spiritual creature according to Hegel: 'The "nature" of a self-conscious agent is that it need not be at one with itself, and this way of existing is a way of living that the rest of organic life does not share. His nature is not to have what is natural be definitive for him' (Pinkard 2012, 60). A spiritual creature essentially 'assumes a stance of "negativity" toward his world and himself' (Pinkard 2012, 60). Pinkard gives a detailed account of what precisely this stance of negativity amounts to. For instance, with regard to perception, it means that spiritual creatures do not merely receive sensory input, but treat such input as potential justificatory grounds for belief (see Pinkard 2012, 28–29). With regard to action, it means that spiritual creatures do not simply follow their natural desires, but ask themselves whether they have reason to do so

(see Pinkard 2012, 63). Ultimately, this negative stance towards anything that is given by nature generates a demand for self-determination or self-sufficiency: to be a spiritual creature, then, is to be able to set normative standards for oneself, to ‘give oneself the law’ (see Pinkard 2012, 55). How spiritual creatures attempt to meet this dauntingly high, vaguely Kantian standard – first, and unsuccessfully, in solitary effort, then through encounters, conflicts and negotiations with others – is a central theme of Pinkard’s book.

In his earlier book on *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*, Robert Pippin has developed an interpretation of Hegel’s account of Spirit, similar to Pinkard’s in important respects. One passage where he summarises his interpretation reads as follows (Pippin 2008, 58):

What spirit is, in other words, is not non-nature or immaterial, but, in Hegel’s constant phrase, the negation of nature ... He thinks this notion is comprehensive enough to cover both cognitive relations to nature, where the mere immediacy of our sensible contact with the world must be ‘negated’ or conceptualized in order to play any role in cognition, and practical relations [...].

The negative stance of Spirit towards nature which both Pinkard and Pippin emphasise is expressed by Hegel in his ubiquitous phrase that it is essential to Spirit that it ‘liberates’ itself from nature. For instance, in a passage from a transcript of Hegel’s lectures on Subjective Spirit from 1825 quoted by Pippin, Hegel states (Hegel 1978, 7):³

3 The passage is from a transcript by Kehler; an almost identical version of the same passage can be found in Griesheim’s transcript from the same year (see Hegel 2008, 151; cf. Hegel 1978, 92 – *A Fragment on the Philosophy of Spirit*). Here, and in what follows, I quote Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* from 1830 according to numbered paragraphs; when quoting from the additions to the *Encyclopaedia* paragraphs compiled by Boumann, I add the page numbers in the first volume of Hegel 1978. When citing from the lecture transcripts or additional texts (such as the *Fragment on the Philosophy of Spirit*), I quote the page numbers in the first volume of Hegel 1978. I use M.J. Petry’s translation (first and second volumes) when quoting, in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Spirit*, from passages from the introduction or from the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*; otherwise I use the translation by W. Wallace and A.V. Miller.

Spirit has its beginning in nature in general. One must not think merely of external nature, but also of the sensuous nature of man himself, his sensuous, bodily being, sensing, being in relation with other general objects; mere sensing is confined solely to animals. The extreme to which spirit tends is its freedom, its infinity, its being in and for itself. These are the two aspects, but if we ask what spirit is, the immediate answer is that it is this motion, this process of proceeding forth from, of freeing itself from nature; this is the being, the substance of spirit itself.

As both Pinkard and Pippin emphasise, it is crucial to Hegel's account that Spirit is not an entity which can be identified independently of the motion or process in which it is involved, as if engaging in this motion or process was accidental to this entity. Rather, the passage just quoted continues: 'Spirit is usually spoken of as subject, as doing something, and apart from what it does, as this motion, this process, as still particularized, its activity being more or less contingent [...].'⁴ In contrast to this, Hegel states that 'it is of the very nature of Spirit to be this absolute liveliness, this process, to proceed forth from naturalness, immediacy, to sublimate, to quit its naturalness [...].' What makes something a spiritual creature, then, is that it engages in the relevant kind of activity; engaging in this activity is constitutive of it as spiritual creature. Spirit, on the present account, is therefore not a static entity, but active form.⁴ Furthermore, both Pippin and Pinkard point out that with regard to Spirit's relation to nature, Hegel defends a 'non-dualist' (and yet non-reductive) account (Pippin 2008, 52; see Pinkard 2012, 27–30). The entities which engage in the activity of liberation from nature are, from an ontological point of view, natural creatures or animals. By describing them as spiritual creatures, we do not introduce a novel ontological entity over and above their natural animal body, but rather ascribe to them forms of activity which cannot be explained within a purely naturalistic framework. While Spirit cannot be explained in exclusively naturalistic terms, spiritual creatures are nevertheless necessarily naturally embodied (Pippin 2008, 52).

One may at this point raise the question of why, on this reading of Hegel, spiritual creatures are necessarily natural animals. The most obvious answer would seem to be something like the following: if Spirit is not

⁴ There are clear Aristotelian undertones in Hegel's account in this regard, as both Pinkard and Pippin emphasise.

a static entity, but activity, one has to postulate a subject who engages in this activity, otherwise the activity could not get off the ground. This subject is the natural animal. On this view, being naturally embodied is an external, necessary condition for a spiritual creature to be what it is.⁵ However, this line of thought does not quite do justice to the relation between spiritual activity and natural body in Hegel's account. Returning to the passage from the lectures quoted above, one can make the following simple, but striking observation. When Hegel speaks of Spirit as liberating itself from nature, he does not merely mean that spiritual creatures constitutively engage in activities which make them ever more unlike natural creatures, thus widening the distance between Spirit and nature. Rather, he seems to have in mind that Spirit liberates itself from its *own* nature. As he puts it in the passage above, 'spirit has its beginning in nature' – and it is from this nature, the nature from which it begins, that Spirit strives to liberate itself. In fact, Hegel's expression that Spirit 'liberates' itself from nature would be ill chosen unless nature was in some sense 'attached' to Spirit to begin with. I can distance myself or move away from something which is external to me, but in order for me to liberate myself from something, it has to have previously impinged on me in some sense. Liberation implies an act of separation, which in turn presupposes some form of connection. In short: nature, and more specifically the natural body, does not just constitute a necessary condition for Spirit – more specifically, for spiritual activity – in Hegel's account. Rather, in this account, nature must be thought of as in some sense constitutive of Spirit. There must be a sense in which Spirit *is* nature – only against this background can its impetus to liberate itself from nature arise.

I do not think this is in itself a controversial claim. Pinkard, for instance, in formulating again the thought that it is of the essence of Spirit to take a negative stance towards nature, writes that 'it is the very nature of a self-conscious agent to be potentially at odds with its own nature' (Pinkard 2012, 58) – thus indicating that it is its *own* nature which Spirit is at odds with. Even more explicit is the following statement: 'A self-conscious agent both is his body (since the person is an animal) and is not his body since the agent establishes a practical distinction between himself and his body' (Pinkard 2012, 29).⁶ However, I do think

⁵ Some passages in Pippin can be read as if he conceived of the natural body as an enabling condition for spiritual activity in this way: see for instance Pippin 2008, 53.

⁶ See also Pippin 2008, 53.

it is worth emphasising this aspect of Hegel's account of Spirit, since it is not discussed prominently in reconstructions of Hegel's position which centre on Spirit's negative stance towards nature. Furthermore, by turning our attention towards this aspect of Hegel's account – instead towards the negativity-claim – we will be able to bring into view novel, perhaps surprising implications of Hegel's notion of Spirit and its relation to nature. As long as one focuses on Spirit's negative attitude and activity towards nature one may gain the impression that Spirit is for Hegel absolute, self-grounded activity – an activity which is free in the sense of unconditioned – much like the self-producing activity which underlies Fichte's 'I'. Indeed, there are passages in Hegel which seem to render support to this line of reading: for instance, when he states repeatedly that Spirit is a 'product of itself' (1986a, § 377, Addition, 7; see also Hegel 2008, 152), or that its 'actuality' is 'merely that it has made itself into what it is' (1986a, § 377, Addition, 7). In contrast, by attending to the fact that Hegel's account must leave room for the idea that Spirit is originally *constituted* by nature, one will be able to see that Hegel's picture is in fact quite different from Fichte's. Spirit, for Hegel, is not self-created in the way in which Fichte's 'I' is. Rather, it is to a certain extent due to and dependent on something other than itself – nature.

One might object at this point that this way of putting the matter comes dangerously close to ascribing Hegel some kind of reductive naturalism. But this cannot be Hegel's intention. What we need, instead, is an interpretation which allows us to see how nature as constitutive of Spirit can be both Spirit's *own* nature and Spirit's *own nature*. Whatever nature precisely turns out to be on this account, it must possess characteristics which warrant calling it natural; at the same time, it must possess characteristics which warrant describing it as Spirit's *own* nature. Thus, when we say that in Hegel's account, Spirit is to a certain extent dependent on something other than itself, we need not understand this in the sense that it is dependent on something which is completely heterogeneous to itself. Rather, it is dependent on nature as inherently spiritual – or, more accurately, it is dependent on nature being such that it is inherently spiritual.

In the next section, I shall render support to these remarks through a close reading of some passages from Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit* in his *Encyclopaedia*. In particular I shall focus on two central claims which Hegel makes here: the claim that Spirit's liberation from nature essentially involves pain; and the claim that Spirit is essentially manifestation. Against this background, we will then be in a position to consider, in the final section, how Hegel's account of classical art can be seen as standing

in continuity with the interpretation suggested here. As we shall see, this will not merely provide further confirmation for the suggested interpretation, but also, on the other hand, shed novel light on Hegel's conception of art, especially of classical art.

MANIFESTATION AND PAIN

In his introduction to the *Philosophy of Spirit* in his *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Hegel opens the section titled 'Notion of Spirit' (1986a, §§ 381–384) with a paragraph dedicated to reflections on the relation between Spirit and nature. This paragraph is notoriously intricate and wide-ranging,⁷ but for our present purposes I merely want to draw our attention to the fact that Hegel here introduces nature in relation with the notion of externality and externalisation. Spirit, Hegel writes, 'has its complete external objectivity in nature' (1986a, § 381); nature is its 'externalization' (ibid.). In the next paragraph, § 382, Hegel then goes on to highlight an aspect of the notion of Spirit which he does not yet mention explicitly in § 381: the 'essence of spirit', Hegel writes here, is 'freedom' (1986a, § 382).⁸ Explaining what this freedom amounts to more specifically, Hegel writes: 'On account of this formal determination, spirit *can* abstract from all that is external and even from its own externality, its determinate being' (Hegel 1986a, § 382). Given the connection between nature and externality made in the preceding paragraph, the idea introduced here appears to be close to the thesis that Spirit essentially liberates itself from nature, as found in the lecture transcript from 1825. However, in the present context, Hegel seems to put particular emphasis on how radical and thorough this liberation is. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Hegel here implicitly refers to Kant's conception of transcendental freedom as involving not merely the freedom from particular desires and

⁷ See Quante 2011, 116–139, for extensive discussion.

⁸ More accurately, Hegel writes: 'Das Wesen des Geistes ist [...] *formell* die Freiheit' (Hegel 1986a, § 382, my emphasis). Hegel's notion of the term 'formell' would deserve a more extensive discussion and analysis, which I cannot give at this point. My tentative suggestion is that with the term 'formell', Hegel wants to emphasise that focusing on Spirit as freedom renders a merely one-sided and, to a certain extent, abstract account of Spirit, the more concrete account being given in the following paragraphs, where Hegel introduces the notion of manifestation.

inclinations (and hence the capacity to suspend the satisfaction of any particular desire), but from natural desires and inclinations *altogether*.⁹ However, Hegel has a different take on this kind of freedom than Kant: he describes it as a capacity, rather than a transcendental fact, suggesting that freedom in its complete form involves the exercise of this capacity for abstraction. This quasi-Kantian conception of freedom resonates with the emphasis on Spirit's negative stance towards nature by recent interpretations of Hegel's notion of Spirit, as discussed above.

The next sentence of § 382 introduces a novel aspect. It reads: '[Spirit] can bear the infinite pain of the negation of its individual immediacy i.e. maintain itself affirmatively in this negativity and have identity as a being-for-self.' A spiritual creature essentially has the capacity to abstract altogether from its externality and determinate being. But now we learn that such negation brings with it 'infinite pain', more specifically, the 'infinite pain of the negation of its individual immediacy'. The pain which Hegel has in mind here is obviously neither a mere physiological event, nor a simple sense datum. Rather, Hegel refers to a complex state involving some form of inner division or separation.¹⁰ In abstracting from individual immediacy, a spiritual creature abstracts from its *own* individual immediacy, thus introducing a rift into itself. This rift underlies the pain in question. Accordingly, in order for this pain to be possible, Spirit must be *both* individual immediacy and the process of abstracting from or negating it. Both these aspects must be ascribed to Spirit itself. The pain in question is therefore, as Hegel explains in the addition to the same paragraph, self-inflicted (Hegel 1986a § 382, Addition, 51): 'Pain therefore is not derived by spirit from without, as it was imagined to be when men enquired into the manner of its having come into the world.' (Hegel 1986a § 377, Addition, 7) In fact, this idea is already implicit in the first sentence of the paragraph: Hegel states here that Spirit abstracts from its *own* externality etc., indicating that Spirit finds itself identical with that which it abstracts from.

The discussion of freedom and pain prepares Hegel's introduction of a further notion in the next paragraph, which is central to his account of Spirit in the *Encyclopaedia*. The relevant passage reads as follows: 'The determinateness of spirit is therefore *manifestation*. Spirit is

⁹ Compare also the Kantian aspect of Hegel's account of free will in *The Philosophy of Right* (Hegel 1986b, § 5).

¹⁰ See also Hegel 1986a, § 472 for Hegel's discussion of pain as an essential characteristic of practical Spirit.

not a certain determinateness or content, the expression [*Äußerung*] or exteriority [*Äußerlichkeit*] of which is merely a distinct form of it. Rather than revealing something therefore, its determinateness and content is itself this revelation' (Hegel 1986a § 383). At first sight, it is not clear that notions such as manifestation and revelation bear any connection to the preceding discussion about freedom as abstraction and pain. However, some of Hegel's reflections in the addition to § 382 indicate how one might draw such a connection. Hegel here argues roughly as follows. The pain which is characteristic of Spirit is not merely self-inflicted by Spirit, it is also essential to Spirit. The abstraction from individual immediacy which is constitutive of Spirit always and necessarily occurs against the background of an identification with individual immediacy; therefore, it is always and necessarily accompanied by pain. Thus, the addition states: 'The other, the negative, the contradiction, the disunion, is therefore inherent in the nature of spirit. This disunion carries with it the possibility of pain.' (Hegel 1986a, § 382, Addition, 51) To be a spiritual creature, then, is essentially to identify with something which is at the same time external (insofar as it is something one can abstract from, something one can negate). Highlighting this aspect of externality, one can put the same point by saying that Spirit is essentially externalised. It is at this point that the notion of manifestation becomes relevant. We can bring into view what Hegel means by it by returning to § 383, where the notion of manifestation is contrasted with the notion of expression. To quote again: 'Spirit is not a certain determinateness or content, the expression [*Äußerung*] or exteriority [*Äußerlichkeit*] of which is merely a distinct form of it. Rather than revealing something therefore, its determinateness and content is itself this revelation' (Hegel 1986a, § 383). When we speak of something being expressed or expressing itself – for instance, a feeling – Hegel argues, we hold that it possesses certain features by which we can individuate it – it possesses 'a certain determinateness or content', as Hegel puts it. For instance, a feeling has a characteristic way of what it feels like to have it. However, the feeling has this feature independently of whether it also comes to be expressed, let us say, in certain facial expressions or bodily movements. The feeling is what it is, in other words, independently of whether it is being expressed or not.¹¹ In

11 Obviously, this is not true for all feelings; in fact, perhaps no actual feeling fully satisfies this description. But this is of no importance for the present argument – for our purposes it is enough to assume that there *may* be cases like the one described above.

this sense, it is a content ‘the expression or exteriority of which is merely a distinct form of it’. In contrast, Spirit is not what it is independently of being expressed or externalised. As we have seen, for Hegel it is constitutive of Spirit that it is externalised: it identifies with that in which it is externalised. Spirit’s externalisation is therefore not an ‘ordinary’ case of expression. Rather, it is a case of expression where that which is being expressed is constituted by its expression. In other words: Spirit is not a content whose (external) form is distinct from it. Rather, it is constitutive of this content that it assumes this external form. It is for these cases of externalisation that Hegel wants to reserve the notion of manifestation, in contrast to that of expression. In order to illustrate this point, he also draws on the notion of revelation, making a connection to the Christian notion of revelation in the addition: one usually thinks of Christ as God’s external organ or instrument of revelation, Hegel argues. However, he continues, this is a misunderstanding. In fact, what God reveals in Christ is that it is His own essence and nature ‘to differentiate, to limit Himself, yet to remain with Himself in His difference’ (Hegel 1986a, § 383, Addition, 57). God reveals in Christ that it is His essence to reveal Himself in this way. In this respect, Christ is not merely an external form in which the content of God becomes expressed; rather, Christ Himself is the content of revelation.

Combining now these results with our initial reading of § 381, according to which the externality of Spirit is associated with nature, we can sum up the preceding discussion as follows. Spirit, for Hegel, is manifest in nature, where this means that it is externalised in nature, but in such a way that this externalisation is constitutive of it. At the same time, Spirit involves the capacity to abstract from or negate its external manifestation, which is why it is essentially associated with inner pain and division. Putting this in more simple terms, one might say: Spirit can only negate nature insofar as it also and at the same time finds itself identical with it.

Obviously, these are very abstract claims which beg further illustration. The next section will be dedicated to making them more concrete. Before proceeding to that, however, I want to pause for some brief reflections on the results obtained so far. As we have seen, Hegel speaks in the 1825 lecture of Spirit as the ‘process’ or ‘movement’ of liberating itself from nature. This can be interpreted in the sense sketched in the first section: it is constitutive of spiritual creatures that they engage in the activity of liberating themselves from nature. The same aspect of Hegel’s view appears to be captured in § 382 of the *Encyclopaedia* in the claim that

Spirit has the capacity to abstract from its ‘externality’ and ‘determinate being’. However, we have now seen that this activity of abstraction and liberation from externality can only occur against the background of a preceding or underlying identification with externality.

Now one may raise the question: what makes this preceding or underlying identification possible, what underlies it? There are passages which seem to suggest that in Hegel’s view this identification, again, is due to some activity on the part of Spirit, an activity of appropriation or assimilation. For instance, he states in the addition to § 381: ‘All the activities of spirit are nothing but the various modes in which that which is external is led back into the internality, to what spirit is itself, and it is only by means of this leading back, this idealizing or assimilation of that which is external, that spirit becomes and is spirit’ (Hegel 1986a, § 381, Addition, 37).¹² However, the main text of the same paragraph suggests that even this activity of assimilation can only occur against the background of some preceding identification: Hegel states here that ‘the Notion has *its* complete external objectivity in nature, and has become identical with itself in that this *its* externalization has been sublated’ (Hegel 1986a, § 381, my emphasis). If this is correct, one may wonder whether it is true that on Hegel’s account, Spirit is activity *all the way down*. Should we not rather say that there is one aspect of its identity – its original identification with some external, natural immediacy – with regard to which Spirit is passive, rather than active? Or in other words, should we not add that there is some aspect about its identity which it receives, rather than actively brings about?

THE FUNCTION OF CLASSICAL ART

Following up the suggestion made at the end of the preceding section, we can say that to be a spiritual creature for Hegel is not merely to engage in the activity of liberating oneself from nature, but also, and simultaneously, to find oneself identical with, or manifest in, some external, natural form. This latter aspect of one’s identity as a spiritual creature is not something which one actively brings about, but rather something with regard to which one is passive, which is presupposed in one’s activity. One is, as it

¹² See the interpretation in McCumber 2014, which considers this activity of appropriation as the central characteristic of Spirit.

were, always already manifest in nature and becomes active only against this background. However, if Spirit's being manifest in nature is not due to its own activity, it must be due to nature itself. Nature, in other words, must be such as to allow Spirit to be manifest in it; it must be in some sense inherently 'spiritual', without therefore ceasing to be nature (and thus to be something which is in a certain respect external to Spirit).

I would suggest that there is an entire part of Hegel's mature system which is dedicated to showing that nature is in and of itself inherently spiritual: this is Hegel's 'Anthropology', the first part of his *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*. The nature Hegel is concerned with here is, specifically, human nature. Hegel wants to show that many features which are constitutive of human nature – such as human sensation, feeling, self-feeling, habituation – can be considered as proto-spiritual features or processes. Anthropology is therefore in Hegel a curious hybrid discipline, standing at the intersection of the philosophy of Spirit and the philosophy of nature, and being concerned with what Hegel dubs '*Naturgeist*' (Hegel 1986a, § 387). This gives us a hint as to how the preceding considerations regarding Spirit's relation to nature can be made more concrete: the inherently spiritual nature which Hegel is concerned with may be tentatively assumed to be human nature, and the human natural body. Seen from this perspective, Hegel's position as interpreted above has some immediate and intuitive plausibility: we identify with our natural body, we *are* this body, even though it is not something we have brought about; rather, it has been given to us. Furthermore, we have the capacity to 'negate' it in various ways (for instance, by ignoring its needs and desires, or by trying to suppress them, by altering, shaping and utilising the body etc.). While this seems to be an intuitively plausible and phenomenologically basic way of relating to our own natural body, at the same time, there are many different perspectives from which one can look at the human body: one can look at it as a mechanical object, for instance, or as the locus of biochemical processes. Hegel seems to hold that we need a discipline such as philosophical anthropology in order to enlighten us about the inherently spiritual aspect of the human body – in order to show us that this perspective on it is the ultimately true and valid one.¹³

13 See for instance Hegel 1986a, § 401, where Hegel writes: 'In physiology the intestines and organs are treated only as moments of the animal organism, but they also constitute a systematic embodying of what is spiritual [*Verleiblichung des Geistigen*], and so come in for quite another interpretation'.

However, instead of focusing on Hegel's anthropology, I want to pursue a different route in the following. I want to argue that for Hegel, art – specifically, classical art – has a function which is similar to the function of anthropology: the task of classical art is to show that nature is inherently spiritual. The inherently spiritual nature in question is human nature – which is why, as we shall see, on Hegel's account classical art revolves around the human figure as its main form and content. To be sure, the way in which classical art presents this content is crucially different from the way it is treated in a philosophical discipline such as philosophical anthropology. Most obviously, it presents this content as an aesthetic property, hence as something which is to be sensuously perceived or intuited, rather than grasped in conceptual form. Nevertheless, there is a striking continuity between classical art and philosophical anthropology on this reading: both are dedicated to bringing into view nature, specifically human nature, as a manifestation of Spirit.¹⁴ My main aim in the following will be to point out connections between Hegel's account of classical art and the more general reflections on Hegel's notion of Spirit discussed in the preceding section. If my reading is on the right track, it will turn out that through classical art we experience Spirit as manifest in nature, but in such a way that this manifestation is not just the result of our own doing, but rather inherent in nature itself.

I will start with a discussion of Hegel's account of the central features of classical art in general, and then proceed to look at how these features are instantiated in classical sculpture more specifically. My primary source will be the transcript of Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of art from 1823 by C.G. Hotho,¹⁵ but I will occasionally indicate parallel passages in Hotho's edited version of the lectures, in other lecture transcripts, as well as in Hegel's discussion of art in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*.

Introducing the notion of classical art in his 1823 lecture, Hegel says the following (*VPK*, 36 = Hegel 2014, 213):

14 We will see later on that there is textual evidence for this parallel between classical art and anthropology in Hegel. It is a further question which of these two 'media' is more apt to fully reveal the content in question in Hegel's view. I will briefly address this question towards the end.

15 In contrast to other available lecture transcripts, this one has recently been translated into English. I occasionally retain the original German expression instead of following R.F. Brown's translation in cases where my own interpretation would speak in favour of a different translation.

The second mode is classical art. It is the free, adequate *Einbildung* of the configuration within the concept; a content that has the shape appropriate to it, a content that, as *wahrhafter* content, does not lack *wahrhafte* form. This is the locus of art's ideal. Here the sensuous, the pictorial, no longer counts as sensuous and is no natural being; it is of course a natural shape but, by removing the insufficiency of the finite, it is the kind of natural shape that is perfectly adequate to its concept. The *wahrhafte* content is what is concretely spiritual, and its shape is the human figure; for this figure alone is the shape of the spiritual, the kind of shape in which what is spiritual can depict itself outwardly within temporal existence.

I want to focus on two claims from this passage which are central to Hegel's account of classical art: i) classical art is characterised by what one may call a 'unity' of content and form:¹⁶ it has a content which 'does not lack *wahrhafte* form';¹⁷ and ii) the central content and/or form of classical art is the human figure.¹⁸ Let us consider these claims in turn.

i) When Hegel speaks of the unity of form and content in classical art, he does not just mean that classical art has a certain content and presents this content in a form which is *adequate* to it. Rather, he has something stronger in mind: in some sense, in classical art, the form *is* the content and vice versa. One may therefore say that the subject matter – the content – of classical art just *is* the unity of form and content. It is helpful to turn back to our discussion of Hegel's notion of manifestation at this point, in order to see how one might understand these claims. As we saw, for Spirit to be manifest means for it to have an external form which is constitutive of it as content. I would suggest that Hegel's statement about the relation between form and content in classical art should be understood analogously. In classical art, we have a spiritual content [*das Geistige*] which is constituted by the external form it takes. Classical art, therefore, does not present some content in a certain form which is distinct from (even though perhaps adequate to) the content. Rather, it simply presents a content which is at the same time form, and vice versa: it presents the unity of form and content. In other words, to

¹⁶ See *VPK*, 154 = Hegel 2014, 311.

¹⁷ See also Hegel 1975, 427; *VPK*, 153–154 = Hegel 2014, 311.; *PKÄ*, 28; *PK*, 145.

¹⁸ See also Hegel 1975, 432, 433; *VPK*, 157–158 = Hegel 2014, 313–315; *PKÄ*, 28, 115–116, 123; *PK*, 146.

use Hegel's own terminology: classical art presents Spirit as manifest in a certain external form.¹⁹

ii) More specifically, classical art presents Spirit as manifest in the human body. This means that classical art presents not merely the unity of form and content, but the unity of spiritual content and natural form. Classical art presents the human natural body as 'shape of the spiritual', or Spirit as manifest in the human natural body. But what precisely does it mean to present the human figure in this way – how does classical art accomplish this? I want to address this question by now turning to Hegel's theory of classical sculpture; this will give us a more concrete picture of how precisely Hegel conceives this central feature of classical art. My discussion will be guided by the following hypothesis: it is central to Hegel's account of classical art in general, and classical sculpture in particular, that this form of art strikes a careful and fragile balance between receiving something as given from nature, and idealising this given form of nature by turning it into an artistic form. The fragile balance which results from this constitutes what Hegel calls 'ideality', the defining aesthetic property of classical art.

We can look at both threads in Hegel's position separately, starting with the idea that it is essential to classical art that it receives something as given from nature. Hegel expresses this thought in his discussion of art in the *Encyclopaedia*. He writes: 'Art not only needs, for the intuitions to be produced by it, an external given material, which includes subjective images and representations. It also needs, for the expression of spiritual content, the given forms of nature together with their meaning, which art must discern and appropriate (cf. § 411)' (Hegel 1986a, § 558).²⁰ The lectures make more explicit that the given forms of nature in question are, more specifically, the human figure. Hegel states (*VPK*, 157 = Hegel 2014, 311):

More specifically, this appearance then determines itself in such a way that the shape can only be the human figure, because what is spiritual can reveal itself in the human figure alone. Here the shape

19 This reading is confirmed by the fact that Hegel often speaks of the 'manifestation' of Spirit in the context of his account of classical art, in particular in relation to its characteristic unity of form and content; this is true especially about his 1826 lecture: see for instance *PKÁ*, 28, 116; *PK*, 146.

20 Note that Hegel here explicitly refers to § 411 in his 'Anthropology', where he discusses how Spirit becomes manifest in the human body through processes of habituation and appropriation.

is no longer symbolic but is instead the appearance of spirit, the determination of spirit, its emergence out into existence. The sensible shape of the human being is alone that in which spirit is able to appear. The sensible shape is significant in itself; what it signifies is the spirit that emerges within it.

A classical artist, then, will always and necessarily draw on the human figure as a 'given form of nature'. This claim is of crucial importance for Hegel: in his discussion of sculpture in his 1823 lecture, he makes it repeatedly in different formulations. He states: 'Artists do not devise the prototype; instead it is a given for them. They did not devise the living figure but instead found it. The living figure belongs to nature [...]' (*VPK*, 233–234 = Hegel 2014, 376). And again, a few lines further down (*VPK*, 234–235 = Hegel 2014, 377):

The human bodily nature is a given for the artist; it is the expression of the concept as such; and beyond this, it is the expression of spirit as the concept existent-for-itself. The human body, then, is not solely body as such, but is also the expression of spirit in what is particular. This too is presupposed. As falling within the natural realm, this congruence of the spiritual with what is bodily belongs rather to sensibility, and it is not to be traced back to specific thought-determinations.

In a certain respect, then, the classical artist may appear to be very much constrained with regard to both his subject matter and the form in which he may represent it: his task seems to be simply to replicate the human figure as he finds it in nature. Hegel concedes that it may in fact appear this way: the classical artist may appear to be merely replicating what he finds ready made in nature. He states (*VPK*, 155 = Hegel 2014, 312):

This rules out caprice on the artist's part because the content is present at hand for the artist, who comes upon it, and the artist is only the subjective activity of portraying, is formative as such. In this formative activity the artist certainly also gives the content further shape, but imperceptibly so, inconspicuously, by seeming only to execute what is already complete on its own.

As Hegel makes clear in this statement, the classical artist replicates or executes something which he finds given in nature, but this is only one

aspect of what he does: he also ‘gives the content further shape’, even though he does this ‘imperceptively’, ‘inconspicuously’. This brings us to the second strand in Hegel’s position. Classical art draws on given forms of nature, but it presents them insofar as and to the extent that Spirit becomes manifest in them. In order for that to be possible, the classical artist cannot just replicate the human figure as he finds it in nature, rather he must do something to it – he must, as we will see in a moment, ‘idealise’ it.

Hegel holds that it is specifically the task of classical sculpture to present the human figure as a natural form in which Spirit becomes manifest. He states: ‘So sculpture has spiritual individuality as its object, and sculpture allows Spirit to appear in an immediately material way’ (*VPK*, 229 = Hegel 2014, 373). The question we need to pursue, then, is what precisely the classical sculptor does in order to present the human figure as a material manifestation of Spirit – or in other words, what exactly it is about classical sculpture which turns it into a manifestation of Spirit. In his 1826 lecture, Hegel makes the following statement about what we should look out for when studying classical sculpture: ‘One of the most important aspects of the study of sculpture is to get to know the forms which most completely express Spirit, through which ideality is accomplished’ (*PKÄ*, 175, my translation). This association between ideality and the expression or (more accurately) manifestation of Spirit can also be found in the 1823 lecture (*VPK*, 235–236 = Hegel 2014, 377–378):

If a work of sculpture based on the human figure is supposed to show how this figure expresses the divine as such, and one wants to examine this sculpture very specifically, then one has to explain which parts of it, which of its features or configurations, correspond to a specific inwardness. We are led to such a study by the ancient works. [...] So then, in examining the particular formation with regard to its spiritual expression, the procedure had to have been determining the extent to which these features would be something ideal and expressive of what is spiritual [...].

This statement is a prelude to an extensive discussion of Winckelmann’s account of classical Greek sculpture, in particular of his comparison between ancient Egyptian and ancient Greek sculpture. Winckelmann, Hegel claims, was the first to understand that ideality is the unique and outstanding feature of Greek sculpture. Since Hegel interprets ideality as the feature of a sculptural body through which it becomes ‘expressive’ of Spirit, this implies that Winckelmann is in Hegel’s view the first to have

had a clear vision of that unique feature of the ancient Greek sculptural body which makes it apt for the manifestation of Spirit. This feature is thrown into relief by Winckelmann especially through his contrasting comparison with ancient Egyptian sculptures: ‘With refined sensibility, Winckelmann highlighted the features that the Greeks characteristically specified for the ideal. Egyptian works of sculpture demonstrate great technical skill; they have excellent features, but the ideal is not yet present in their case’ (*VPK*, 236 = Hegel 2014, 378). In discussing this contrast, Hegel follows Winckelmann’s *History of Ancient Art* in great detail. It is noteworthy that he begins his discussion by arguing that some Archaic Egyptian and Greek sculptures, such as the pediments from the Temple of Aphaea at Aegina, are deficient precisely because they imitate nature too faithfully, to the detriment of their ‘ideality’: ‘The Aeginetans stand out because of their most faithful imitation of nature. This imitation goes so far as reproducing random features of the skin, with no striving for ideality’ (*VPK*, 237–238 = Hegel 2014, 379). More generally, however, Hegel follows Winckelmann in charging Egyptian sculpture with being too static, lifeless and monotonous. Egyptian sculptures, Hegel states, are typically composed of geometrical lines. Their posture is stiff, appears strained and somewhat mechanical; their feet are ‘positioned unnaturally’ (*VPK*, 238 = Hegel 2014, 380), standing in parallel posture; their arms ‘hang straight down at the sides’ (*VPK*, 238 = Hegel 2014, 380). All of this means, most importantly, that they are not properly engaged in action.

In contrast to that, Greek sculptures ‘are [...] utterly ideal, and we must learn from them what is ideal, for they are unrivalled’ (*VPK*, 239 = Hegel 2014, 381). Furthermore, Hegel states that we owe the ‘criterion distinguishing the ideal from what is natural’ (*VPK*, 238 = Hegel 2014, 380) to Winckelmann. It is not clear that Winckelmann thought of himself as possessing such a criterion.²¹ More importantly, it is not obvious that Hegel himself operates with such a criterion, whether or not it may be correctly ascribed to Winckelmann. Rather, it is striking that Hegel approaches the ideality of Greek sculpture primarily in negative fashion, pointing out which features of the sculpture are *not* constitutive of it. For instance, he emphasises that it is not simply in virtue of the physical features of the human bodies they represent that Greek sculptures are ideal. Rather, if they are ideal, this is the case because they assume certain

21 See Winckelmann 1764, 142, where he offers reasons as to why finding a conceptual criterion for beauty seems difficult if not impossible. Instead, he here refers to beauty as ‘*eins von den großen Geheimnissen der Natur*’.

postures (*VPK*, 243 = Hegel 2014, 385). However, Hegel has little to say about exactly which postures are conducive to ideality. He makes clear, in any case, that ideal sculptures ought not to display expressive gestures, but rather a composed posture – abstaining, nevertheless, from the static monotony of Egyptian sculptures (*VPK*, 243–244 = Hegel 2014, 384–385).

Hegel goes into more detail when discussing the ideality of the Greek face, in particular the Greek profile. Again, he follows Winckelmann's guidance in some detail,²² but he takes a step beyond his guide in one important instance. It is characteristic of the ideal profile, Hegel states, that it is defined by two perpendicular lines: one line connecting forehead and nose, another one connecting the tip of the nose with the ear. However, instead of simply describing the proportions and geometrical features which are constitutive of the ideality of a Greek profile, like Winckelmann, Hegel tries to come up with an explanatory account of what it is that makes them ideal. He states (*VPK*, 241 = Hegel 2014, 383–383):

The eye is the organ of a theoretical relationship to things. The mouth is the practical organ. This second or ideal disposition towards objects, the reflective disposition, appears in the upper portion of the countenance; it faces outwards and is the main thing, and it furnishes the ideal character of human physiognomy.

One may reconstruct Hegel's argument roughly as follows. Human features are ideal to the extent that Spirit is manifest in them. It is essential to spiritual creatures that they can take a 'theoretical' attitude towards things (one may hear a faint echo of Hegel's thesis that Spirit is the movement of liberating itself from nature in this claim). Eye and forehead are the organs of the theoretical attitude towards things. The mouth is the organ of a more primitive, practical (i.e. licking, devouring etc.) attitude towards things. In the ideal Greek profile, eye and forehead are more dominant than the mouth. Accordingly, this profile is more apt as manifestation of Spirit than other types of (human or animal) profile in which the mouth is more protruding, or the forehead more receding.²³

²² See Winckelmann 1764, 176–177.

²³ The argument about the Greek profile sketched above can also be found in the 1826 lecture, though it is here less explicit: see *PK*, 201–202; *PKÁ*, 177–178. Hegel's view here is probably influenced by the theory of the 'facial angle' developed by the eighteenth-century Dutch anatomist, Petrus Camper; Hegel was familiar with Camper's theory.

It is easy to find fault with this argument. Most importantly, the argument seems to presuppose what it is supposed to establish: that certain parts of the human body, or rather a certain arrangement of such parts, are particularly apt to give expression to Spirit. Thus, Hegel seems to presuppose that the human eye and forehead are ‘spiritual organs’, as they are the organs of a theoretical attitude towards things, while the mouth, in contrast, is the organ of a more primitive, animal-like attitude towards the world. However, without further argument, this presupposition seems arbitrary and ad hoc: why not emphasise instead, for instance, that the mouth is the organ of speech, and therefore of an essentially spiritual activity? On the basis of this assumption, one would reach the contrary result that a protruding mouth is more apt for the manifestation of spirit than a receding mouth, and therefore more ideal.

However, one should note that it is a very isolated instance of this type of explanation in the lectures.²⁴ In general, Hegel abstains from attempting to give a reductive explanation of what makes human bodily features apt for the manifestation of Spirit, or to present and apply a positive, conceptual criterion for ideality. Instead, he follows Winckelmann in describing features of classical Greek sculptures which are conducive to ideality. More often than not, however, he takes a negative approach by describing in contrast those features which are *detrimental* to ideality

24 This is true even though Hegel alludes with careful approval to the physiognomic project of explaining what makes certain bodily organs apt for the expression of mental states at one point in the 1823 lecture. Here he even refers to phrenologist and anatomist Franz Joseph Gall as a potential guide for this undertaking: ‘Each bodily part must be examined from two perspectives: physically, and how it is capable of expressing something spiritual. This would be to consider it the way Gall did, crudely to be sure, using the cranium’ (*VPK*, 236 = Hegel 2014, 377). It would be worthwhile – though beyond the scope of this chapter – to investigate to what extent this marks a change of position on Hegel’s part with regard to his trenchant critique of phrenology in his earlier *Phenomenology of Spirit*. It is noteworthy that in Hotho’s own edition of the lectures (from which Knox’s translation derives), Hegel’s qualified approval of Gall’s approach is instead turned by Hotho into downright rejection: ‘In this matter each organ must in general be considered from two points of view, the purely physical one and that of spiritual expression. It is true that in this connection we may not proceed after the manner of Gall who makes the spirit into a bump on the skull’ (Hegel 1975, 716). Note the close parallel between the passages from the lectures on aesthetics just quoted and the passage from the ‘Anthropology’ in Hegel 1986a § 401 (mentioned in footnote 13).

in a sculpture. Considering Hegel's overall method of providing an indirect, descriptive account of ideality, it seems reasonable to suppose, then, that for Hegel ideality – the manifestation of Spirit in a human natural body – is to a certain extent an irreducibly aesthetic property. Or in any case, if it can be reduced to properties which can be grasped in conceptual form, such that one might derive general 'criteria of ideality' from this finding, such a reduction is at least no trivial endeavour, and Hegel does not pursue it systematically. This conjecture finds more explicit confirmation in a statement from Hegel's discussion of sculpture quoted above: 'As falling within the natural realm, this congruence of the spiritual with what is bodily belongs rather to sensibility, and it is not to be traced back to specific thought-determinations' (*VPK*, 234–235 = Hegel 2014, 377). Ideality – the 'congruence of the spiritual with what is bodily' – is something which has to be sensed or intuited, and cannot be reduced to 'specific thought-determinations'.

A classical Greek sculpture, then, insofar as it displays ideality, is on the one hand modelled after human nature. But it is not just a faithful replication of whatever the artist finds in human nature. Rather, it presents the human body in such a way that it is turned into as thorough a manifestation of Spirit as possible – this is what it means to idealise it. However, if the preceding analysis is correct, it is impossible, or at least not trivial, to give a reductive explanatory account of what it means to idealise the human body. Instead, this seems to be something which the artist – and the spectator – must simply intuit.

Let us now connect these results with the preceding general reflections on Hegel's notion of Spirit. We have seen plenty of textual evidence to suggest that in Hegel's view the task of classical art is to show Spirit as manifest in human natural form. Given Hegel's notion of manifestation, this does not just mean that classical art presents some (spiritual) content in a (natural) form which is adequate or appropriate to this content. Rather, a classical work of art presents the natural human body as constitutive of Spirit. Or in other words, it presents the unity of spiritual content and natural human form. This result, then, ties in with our general analysis according to which the notion that Spirit is manifest in nature is central to Hegel's account of Spirit. What was not yet apparent from this general analysis, however, is the crucial function of art – and in particular that of classical art: namely, to bring that state of affairs into view, by showing how Spirit becomes manifest in nature. I also suggested, furthermore, that for Hegel, Spirit's becoming manifest in nature cannot be solely due to Spirit's own doing and activity. Rather, it must be to a certain extent due

to nature itself. Now it may seem that this claim does not sit well with the result that Spirit's becoming manifest in human natural form is brought into view by works of art, in particular by sculptures. After all, works of art are artefacts, made from lifeless material such as stone or bronze through human manipulation. Nothing would seem to be more obviously the result of spiritual activity than a sculpture. However, I would like to emphasise again the curious position of classical art, standing in between passivity and activity. The classical artist essentially draws on the given forms of nature, the human body. As Hegel repeats again and again, this is a content and form which he finds ready-made in nature, which is given to him. It is true that he must do something to this form or content in order to turn it into a work of art which displays ideality, but he thereby merely 'imperceptively, inconspicuously' gives further shape to what is already there. If a classical sculpture can bring into view Spirit's manifestation in the 'given form of nature' which is the human body, then, this is not merely due to the artist's activity, but also to these given forms of nature themselves. And this twofold origin of the classical work of art is also reflected and contained in its content: the classical work presents Spirit's becoming manifest in nature *as* partly due to nature itself.

Returning briefly at this point to Hegel's general remarks to the effect that the central characteristic of Spirit is manifestation, it is interesting to note that Hegel sometimes tends to present this as part of a heroic story in which Spirit triumphantly overcomes and defeats 'otherness'. For Spirit to be manifest means for it to find itself in the other, hence to overcome or even submerge otherness in a certain sense. For instance, in the addition to *Encyclopaedia* § 382, he states: 'Spirit is not free however, simply in that it is independent of its other in being external to it, for it achieves this independence within this other. Its freedom is actualized not through the withdrawal [*Flucht*] from this other, but through the overcoming [*Überwindung*] of it' (Hegel 1986a, § 382, Addition, 49–51). However, in light of our preceding discussion, one might as well reverse this perspective. Spirit's becoming manifest in nature is not just the result of a 'heroic' feat on the part of Spirit. Rather, there is something about nature which makes this possible, something which nature contributes to this result. Hence Spirit's manifestation in nature may equally well be considered as part of a story which ought to inspire the humbleness which comes with finding oneself dependent on an 'other'.

Before closing, I want to draw our attention to an important question raised by the preceding discussion. I will not be able to answer this question here; I merely want to flag it. According to the interpretation

developed above, the ideality of a Greek classical sculpture, in virtue of which it embodies the manifestation of Spirit in natural human form, appears to be for Hegel an irreducibly aesthetic quality. What makes a sculpture ideal has to be intuited and cannot be reduced to conceptual principles. One may wonder how this squares with Hegel's famous claim that art and philosophy (and religion) have the same content, but that philosophy captures this content in a more truthful, complete and therefore ultimately 'higher' form (*VPK*, 5 = Hegel 2014, 183). According to our interpretation, classical art on the one hand has a content which is certainly of great philosophical relevance: it presents Spirit's being manifest in nature. On the other hand, this content is (to a certain degree at least) irreducibly aesthetic. How is it possible, on this view, to maintain either the claim that philosophy and art have the same content, or that philosophy is higher than art? For instance, how can we say that philosophical anthropology, as suggested above, has for Hegel a similar function as classical art – both convey the same content – if only classical art can fulfil this function fully or properly? Furthermore, if only art can properly convey this content, how can philosophy be said to be higher than art for the reason that it conveys the same content, but in more complete and truthful form?

It seems to me that one can hold on to the claim that philosophy and art (and more specifically in this case: philosophical anthropology and classical art) have the same content even if the content conveyed by classical works of art is to a certain extent irreducibly aesthetic. For one might argue that philosophy and art convey different aspects of the same content, and thereby complement each other: for instance, philosophy makes a general, conceptual claim about Spirit being manifest in human nature, while works of art demonstrate this in individual, concrete instances. And this need not be taken to imply that art is thereby relegated to a subordinate, merely illustrative function. For one might argue that in order to have genuine knowledge of the fact that Spirit is manifest in nature, one must grasp this both in conceptual, general form, and be presented with concrete, individual instances of it. On the other hand, opting for such a strategy may make it more difficult to maintain the second claim, that philosophy is higher than art for the reason that it presents the same content, but in more complete and truthful form. It is natural to understand this claim in the sense that philosophy in Hegel's view is capable of doing everything that art does, only better (more completely, more truthfully). If, however, philosophy and art complement each other in the way just indicated, and art is indeed indispensable in this respect, then philosophy cannot be considered as higher than art in

this sense. On this reading, art can certainly never be simply replaced or made obsolete by philosophy. Perhaps one need not read Hegel's claim in this strong sense, but assuming that one does, the present reading of Hegel's notion of classical art in fact has revisionary consequences: it implies that philosophy is not, after all, higher than art.²⁵

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²⁵ I would like to thank Paul A. Kottman and Michael Squire, as well as all the participants at the 2016 conference in London, for many inspiring and thought-provoking discussions on the topic of this essay, and on Hegelian aesthetics in general.

MICHAEL SQUIRE

UNSER KNIE BEUGEN WIR DOCH NICHT MEHR?

Hegel, classical art and the Reformation of art history

This chapter is an attempt to articulate a particular – and no doubt particularly idiosyncratic – response to Hegel’s *Lectures on Aesthetics*.¹ It is written from an academic background quite different from that of other contributors: I cannot lay claim to any specialist knowledge of German Idealism, and the intricacies of Hegel’s philosophy, not to mention its *Nachleben* among the likes of Nietzsche and Heidegger, are several phenomenological (dare one say idealist?) levels above my pay-grade. Over the past decade or so, I have nonetheless found myself returning to Hegel, and most frequently to the *Lectures on Aesthetics*. Hegel has not always provided the answers. Again and again, though, he has helped me to formulate my questions.

These frequent revisits have led to a rather ambivalent relationship. In one sense, my chapter pays homage to the extraordinary explanatory power of Hegel’s history of art: in particular, it surveys what, as we approach

1 This chapter is lightly adapted from the transcript of the paper delivered at our London workshop in June 2016. It is a pleasure to thank the Morphomata International Center for Advanced Studies for providing the opportunity to revisit Hegel’s *Lectures on Aesthetics* (during a happy residence at the University of Cologne in 2014–2015, above all in conversation with Paul A. Kottman); subsequent research – both for this chapter, and for the book as a whole – has been supported by the Leverhulme Trust. For their comments on earlier versions of this paper, I am grateful to Jaś Elsner, Jonas Grethlein and Paul Kottman, as well as to the participants of the 2016 London workshop (in particular Joshua Billings, Lydia Goehr, Simon Goldhill, Robert Pippin, Fred Rush, Jeremy Tanner and Joanna Woodall).

their 200th anniversary, the *Lectures* offer a historian of classical art. While bowing a reverential knee, however, I also want to push back against some of the assumptions directing Hegel's account of art and art history. Hegel offers a compelling diagnosis of the modernist cultural distance between what he labels the 'classical' and the 'romantic';² from an intellectual and cultural historical viewpoint, a foremost contribution lies in marrying the history of western art with the history of religion – that is, with ideas about the divine, the Christian Incarnation, and with the centrality of Judaeo-Christian traditions in defining our attitudes to the material world around us. But for all the seductive power of Hegel's lectures, I worry about their ideological underpinnings:³ above all, I feel uneasy with that recurrent first person plural – the Hegelian 'we' that defines the viewpoint for reifying art's present, past and future. In all this, it is the contingencies of Hegelian theology – the very assumptions informing and informed by Hegelian teleology – that trouble me most. Indeed, my bipolar relationship with the *Lectures* no doubt has to do with my own troubled theological conditioning – schooled in a Benedictine monastery, and struggling to reconcile Hegel's deeply Protestant thinking with a residual Roman Catholic upbringing ...

To give my comments a structure, I organise them in two parts, corresponding with that personal push and pull of the Hegelian account. In the first section, I chart why I think art historians – especially those interested in Greek and Roman materials – should care about Hegel, situating a number of recent scholarly developments against the backdrop of Hegelian interests. The second section, by contrast, is a preliminary attempt to explain some of my own difficulties – above all with a view to the contingencies of theology.⁴

2 For Hegel's account of symbolic, classical and romantic *Kunstformen* – and the 'Entwicklung des Ideals zu den besonderen Formen des Kunstschönen' – cf. below, pp. 142–146, as well as the introduction to this volume (pp. 34–42).

3 My talk of 'ideology' draws above all on the work of W.J.T. Mitchell: cf. below, n. 86. Comparison might be made with Whitney Davis' postcolonial anxieties about rival 'onto-theologies', as expressed in this volume: cf. pp. 93–95.

4 The chapter's second section thus returns to some of the ideas that first led me to Hegel – within a project on *Image and Text in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, and especially the residual logocentricism of 'Protestant' art history: cf. Squire 2009, 1–193, esp. 58–71.

I.

Let me begin with the pull: how can Hegel help a classicist and classical art historian formulate questions about the materials we study, and how can his particular answers aid us in our modern-day understanding of the Greek and Roman past?

I have always found it surprising that classicists have not made more of the *Lectures on Aesthetics*. When I discussed the present project with classicist colleagues in the UK and elsewhere (especially in Germany), many responded with bemused bewilderment: whatever the *Lectures* represented, they were generally deemed to be alien to the research agendas of my various interlocutors. This corresponds, I think, with a broader pattern of scholarly (non-)engagement. Countless historians of aesthetics have turned to Hegel as a sort of Nostradamus of western art history: not only did he diagnose a cultural state of modernism, he also prophesied so much of art's modernist march; the various art historical '-isms' of the last 150 years all in some sense speak, if not quite of art's *Auflösung*, at least perhaps of its convergence with philosophy – its 'invitation to intellectual consideration ...', for knowing philosophically what art is'.⁵ But whereas the likes of Arthur Danto, Michael Fried, T.J. Clark and Robert Pippin (to name but a few) have revisited the history of modern art through a Hegelian lens, very few art historians have done the same for the earlier materials that Hegel surveys, at least over the half-century or so. Indeed, one might wonder whether the disciplinary practices of modern-day art history – if not the antiquarian isolationism of so much classical art history, then perhaps the propensity of so many students and scholars towards the modern and contemporary, not to mention art history's decided bias towards the study of painting over sculpture – play out the *Geistesgeschichte* that Hegel articulates.⁶

⁵ Hegel 1975, 11 (cf. below, pp. 144–146). On this condition of 'after the beautiful', the most important recent book is Pippin 2014; see also the chapters in this volume by e.g. Pippin, Clark, Kottman and Gardner.

⁶ I refer here to Hegel's argument about why classical sculpture leaves us 'cold' – its lack of concern with 'a person's own subjective inwardness, the life of his heart, the soul of his most personal feelings' (Hegel 1975, 797): 'We do not linger over them [Greek statues] long, or our lingering is rather a scholarly study of the fine shades of difference in their shape and in the forms given to a

But classicists, and classical art historians in particular, *should* care about Hegel. All manner of reasons could be cited here. From my own disciplinary perspective, though, three preliminary motives might stand out in particular.

First is an argument of shameless self-interest: Hegel's account should interest classicists, I think, precisely because of the prominent position that it ascribes to Greek sculpture (as indeed to Greek poetry).⁷ Hegel has some very interesting things to say about the perceived 'coldness' of classical art, related in turn to our 'feeling more at home in painting'.⁸ Yet Hegel articulates a systematic place for classical materials within the larger project of art historical enquiry.⁹ The point may seem facetious. But in an academic context where Greek and Roman materials are so often thought peripheral to 'art history' proper – and where, for their part, classical art historians have largely spoken to themselves (and often, one has to admit, said relatively little of interest to the larger

single individual. We cannot take it amiss if people do not show that profound interest in profound sculptures which they deserve. For we have to study them before we can appreciate them ... But a pleasure that can only be produced after a study, reflection, scholarship, and examination often repeated, is not the direct aim of art. And, even in the case of a pleasure gained by this circuitous route, what remains unsatisfied in the sculpture of antiquity is the demand that a character should develop and proceed outwardly to deeds and actions, and inwardly to a deepening of the soul. For this reason we are at once more at home in painting ...' Cf. also *ibid.*, 485.

⁷ To my mind, Hegel is in fact at his most interesting when discussing the relationship *between* Greek sculpture and poetry: one thinks, for example, of his comments on classical sculpture and epic poetry (e.g. Hegel 1975, 1093–1094), or about the interconnected workings of Greek sculpture and theatre ('the actor comes on the stage as a totally solid objective statue', albeit one that is now 'vitalized'; 'masks presented an unalterable statuesque picture and its plasticity inhibited both the ever-shifting expression of particular emotional moods and also the revelation of the *dramatis personae*': *ibid.*, 1186–1187).

⁸ Hegel 1975, 797. As Hegel continues: 'Painting ... opens the way for the first time to the principle of finite and inherently infinite subjectivity, the principle of our own life and existence, and in paintings we see what is effective and active in ourselves'; cf. Pippin's chapter in this volume, p. 213.

⁹ In this connection, Hegel likewise has much to offer recent debates about whether – and to what extent – we might talk about 'art' as a meaningful category within classical antiquity, as well as about how ideas change over time: see in particular the essays in Platt and Squire 2010, written in response to Tanner 2006, with scholarly overview in Squire 2010, 137–152.

discipline)¹⁰ – Hegel offers an important corrective: he demonstrates how the whole history of western art is inextricable from its classical heritage. The lesson is particularly timely at our present moment, not least here in London. One might do well, for example, to shout it next door to the Courtauld Institute of Art: after abandoning its teaching position in ancient Greek and Roman materials, the Courtauld Institute has radically reduced its undergraduate and graduate teaching in classical art, concentrating instead on what it calls ‘world’ or ‘global’ art history.¹¹ Such talk of a large-scale, comparative history of art is of course in itself deeply Hegelian, however much contemporary art historians may want to distance themselves from Hegel’s agenda. But Hegel simultaneously shows how, within western traditions, if not within the history of *all* art, the classical art of Greece plays a definite and defining role. Whatever else one makes of the *Lectures*, Hegel demonstrates that Greek and Roman materials have a central place within formalist and critical art history, as indeed in the historiography of the discipline: one simply cannot make out as though western art history begins with the Byzantine or the mediaeval.¹²

10 For one bleak (but not entirely unjustified!) recent evaluation of classical art history, see Wood 2012, 17: ‘Art historical classicists are in fact so lacking in self-assertiveness that they have more or less retreated into a corner of their own, isolated from the rest of the discipline ... nor does any classicist dare to build a case for the unavoidability of their field, any case at all.’ On the peculiarity (if not parochialism) of so much classical art history, cf. Tanner 1994; Donohue 2003 (speaking of a ‘disciplinary no-man’s land’); Donohue 2005, 1–14; Elsner 2007a; Squire 2011, xi–xiv; Squire 2012a; Lorenz 2016, esp. 3–7. Numerous soundbites might be cited: e.g. Boardman 1993, 2 (asking why we should want to force antiquity’s artistic splendours into ‘anthropological moulds and structures’, or ‘subject it to the service of ideologies bred by modern concerns with race, gender and psychologies’); Whitley 2001, xxiii (‘all art is material culture ... Classical art history therefore is archaeology, or it is nothing’); compare also Squire 2017b (reviewing Coleman 2015).

11 On the disciplinary stakes, cf. the introduction to this volume – esp. pp. 50–51.

12 Hegel is likewise insistent about the need for careful scholarly study of classical materials. Although there are clear intellectual connections between the two thinkers, Hegel would have little truck with the sentiment of e.g. Curtius 1948, 23 – ‘Pindars Gedichte zu verstehen, kostet Kopfzerbrechen; der Parthenonfries nicht ... Die Bilderwissenschaft ist mühelos, verglichen mit der Bücherwissenschaft’. For an excellent recent championing of ‘the classical tradition’, see now Silk, Gildenhard and Barrow 2014 (with numerous discussions of classical art and its afterlives: e.g. 102–118, 394–401).

This takes me to a second point. For while championing the fundamental importance of classical materials, Hegel also demonstrates how our interpretations are situated.¹³ By nature, classicists can be doggedly positivist creatures, wedded to an idea of the Graeco-Roman past ‘as it really was’, free from the posthumous retrospective perspectives.¹⁴ Hegel is of course sensitive to issues of history: ‘every work of art belongs to its own time, its own people, its own environment, and depends on particular historical and other ideas and purposes’; ‘consequently, scholarship in the field of art is related to something individual and necessarily requires detailed knowledge for its understanding and explanation’.¹⁵ But fundamental to his account is an argument about the conditioning of our viewpoints (our *Sehepunkte*, as Johann Martin Chladni had already labelled it in the eighteenth century). Indeed, Hegel might be said to speak rather more convincingly about the challenges of understanding the past from subsequent and present perspectives than many within the burgeoning field of modern-day ‘classical reception studies’: whatever we have to say about the art of the past, our reflections always reflect the historical actuality of our own age; by definition, the study of past artefacts must always therefore be a comparative venture.¹⁶ As the true ‘father of art *history*’, in Ernst Gombrich’s assessment, Hegel consequently has something to teach not just classicists, but every student who looks to art to reflect upon the past:¹⁷ central to his Idealist project is the notion

13 For discussion, cf. the introduction to this volume, esp. pp. 30–32, 45–48.

14 For one of the most important critiques within the field of classics, see Martindale 1993, esp. 1–34; compare also Martindale 2006 and 2007 (along with the other essays in the same edited books). Taking his lead from Iser, Jauss and associated theories of *Rezeptionsästhetik*, Martindale argues not only that ‘the interpretation of texts is inseparable from the history of their reception’ (Martindale 1993, xiii), but also that ‘there is no Archimedean point from which we can arrive at a final, correct meaning for any text’ (Martindale 2006, 3–4). The subsequent championing of ‘reception’ nonetheless takes more from Kant than it does from Hegel: Martindale argues for ‘a different temporality, involving the *active* participation of readers (including readers who are themselves creative artists) in a two-way process, backward as well as forward, in which the present and past are in dialogue with each other’ (Martindale 2007, 298; cf. also Martindale 2005).

15 Hegel 1975, 14.

16 For an overview of current work on ‘reception studies’ within the study of classical art, see Squire 2014, responding in particular to Prettejohn 2012.

17 Gombrich 1977, 203; cf. the introduction to this volume, p. 44. That said, the *Lectures on Aesthetics* have little time for what Hegel called ‘historical pedantries’

that history is pregnant with extra-historical significance; for Hegel, art is as at once bound to its historical context and yet able to speak beyond those contextual conditions.

Third, and most importantly, classical art historians – like all other historians of art – should care about Hegel because Hegel has himself exerted an incalculable influence on what it is that we do.¹⁸ Like it or not, the disciplinary history of art history is a story of adopting and adapting Hegel's thinking – whether one thinks of Burckhardt and his idea of the 'spirit' of the Renaissance, Riegl and his talk of *Kunstwollen*, or Panofsky and his system of 'iconology' (not to mention his writings about the development of linear perspective – the list could be extended almost indefinitely).¹⁹ As a classicist, I have Hegel in part to thank for the very delineation of 'classical art' as a meaningful category of academic study in the first place – that is, as something defined in relation to what comes (in both formal and cultural terms) before and after.²⁰ Many of our most deep-set metanarratives about classical art – its stylistic forms, motivations and execution – derive from Hegel (in turn adapted from the likes of Winckelmann, Lessing and Herder).²¹ Somewhat alarmingly, though,

(*historische Gelehrsamkeiten*): e.g. Hegel 1975, 629 = Hegel 2013, II: 265) or 'blind pedantry' (*blinde Gelehrsamkeit*): e.g. Hegel 1975, 691 = Hegel 2013, II: 339).

18 'There remains something of the Hegelian epistemology in the work of every art historian', as Michael Ann Holly puts it (Holly 1984, 30).

19 Cf. the introduction to this volume, p. 44.

20 The *Lectures* have much to say about this term 'classical': see especially Hegel 1975, 441. Hegel acknowledges that the term connotes 'every perfect work of art', but characterises this perfection as 'grounded in the complete interpenetration of inner free individuality and the external existent in which and as which this individuality appears'.

21 Among numerous famous examples, one might cite e.g. Gombrich 1950, 49–64 or Clark 1956. For a demonstration of just how great a purchase so many of these Hegelian ideas still have, consider the recent 'Defining Beauty' exhibition at the British Museum, dedicated to the 'Body in ancient Greek art' (cf. Jenkins 2015). Many of the descriptions could almost have been lifted from Hegel: cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 724, apparently referring to the Parthenon pediment sculptures, especially the river-god Ilissos from the west pediment, Hegel notes the 'universal praise' bestowed on the 'expression of independence, of self-repose, in these figures'; 'especially has our admiration been intensified to an extreme by the free vivacity, by the way in which the natural material is permeated and conquered by the spirit and in which the artist has softened the marble, animated it, and given it a soul'. 'In particular, whenever that praise is exhausted, [it] comes back ever anew to the figure of the recumbent river-god

the discipline of classical art history is deeply Hegelian without duly acknowledging the philosophical debts of its explanatory framework.²²

Of course, our knowledge of the actual materials of classical art has changed substantially over the last 200 years. In the same way that Hegel differentiates his understanding of Greek art from Winckelmann's a half-century or so earlier – since 'nowadays ... we have come to know works deeper in expression and more vital and more mature in form' (Hegel cites in particular the so-called 'Elgin marbles' and Aegina pediments) – so too the corpus available to *us* is different from the one available to Hegel.²³ Some of those discoveries must challenge aspects of Hegel's account.²⁴ A foremost example is what we today know about the polychromy of Greek sculpture – including sculptures such as those from the pediments of the Parthenon in Athens, which Hegel associates with a 'purer artistic

which is amongst the most beautiful things preserved to us from antiquity.'

22 To point out these intellectual debts is not always a welcome gesture: see e.g. Stewart 2012 (with response). On Hegel's own response to Winckelmann, see the introduction to this volume, p. 32 – along with the chapters by Davis (esp. pp. 73–76) and Peters (esp. pp. 117–120); on Hegel and Lessing, see below, pp. 149–151.

23 Hegel 1975, 766 (discussing the praise, in the time of Winckelmann and Lessing some fifty years earlier, bestowed on the likes of the Medici Venus and Apollo Belvedere); cf. *ibid.*, 723–724, along with Prettejohn 2012, 44–52. For Hegel's response to the Aegina pediments, restored by Thorvaldsen and installed within the Munich Glyptothek in 1827, see Hegel 1975, 724, 785–786. On the 'Elgin marbles', see Hegel 1975, 173, 724, 726 (an apparent reference to the horse of Selene from the Parthenon's east pediment). It is worth noting that Hegel was a strong advocate of Lord Elgin's exploits in Athens (*ibid.*, 724): 'These acquisitions have been signalized as sacrilege and sharply criticized, but in fact what Lord Elgin did was precisely to save these works of art for Europe and preserve them from complete destruction, and his enterprise deserves recognition through all time'.

24 On re-reading Hegel's *Lectures*, I was particularly struck by his argument about the eyes of Greek sculpture (Hegel 1975, esp. 731–735). For Hegel, classical statuary's 'sacrifice' of the eye – 'this simple expression of soul' – has a programmatic importance, above all when it comes to thinking about differences between sculpture and painting on the one hand, and between classical and romantic forms on the other (*ibid.*, 521). Suffice it to say that Hegel's thesis – namely, that 'the iris and the glance expressive of the spirit is missing from the really classic and free statues and busts preserved to us from antiquity' – is far from 'incontestable'.

taste' that dispensed with the superfluous trappings of colour.²⁵ Where Hegel, like others before him, is wholly dismissive of the dissolution of classical sculpture in Roman art – 'we find no beautiful, free, and great art in Rome'²⁶ – much recent work has emphasised the creative and self-conscious appropriations of later Hellenistic and Roman art.²⁷ Such revisions must be accommodated in a Hegelian history of the classical. Still, it might be argued, they need not necessarily discredit the general thrust of his argument.

But what, in *methodological* terms, can the *Lectures on Aesthetics* offer? I have to admit, on re-reading the *Lectures* in preparation for this chapter, I am not sure how much Hegel would help me if I were an Egyptologist, or for that matter a specialist in any of the 'symbolic' pre-art forms that Hegel discussed:²⁸ I get the sense that my observations would be of little or no broader relevance for the Hegelian account ('historical pedantries', as it might have dismissed them). Indeed, since everything I *might* say could be bracketed under the rubric of an arbitrary relation between form and content – and an essentially deficient and confused content at that – I wonder why I would wish to say anything much at all.²⁹ When it comes to classical and romantic materials, by contrast, what strikes me is the balance Hegel strikes between formalist analysis and interpretive critique: if Hegel's understanding of art is premised on its material form – as something that makes something sensuously known – the frequent recourse

25 See Hegel 1975, 703–708, esp. 708 (with discussion by e.g. Donohue 2005, 66–68): leaning heavily on J.H. Meyer's *Geschichte der bildenden Künste in Griechenland* (1824–1836) and its responses to Winckelmann, Hegel argues that, at the zenith of the classical (above all in the fifth century BC), sculptors abandoned the painting of statues. The argument does not stand: a key recent contribution came in Brinkmann and Wünsche 2004; compare also the essays in Panzanelli, Schmidt and Lapatin 2008.

26 Hegel 1975, 514; cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 185, 682, 788. Perhaps inevitably, given the close associations he makes between the forms of classical sculpture and epic poetry, Hegel also takes a dim view of Virgil's *Aeneid* (cf. *ibid.*, 1073–1074).

27 The bibliography is now formidable: for a survey, cf. Squire 2012b. Suffice it to say that, at least in Britain and North America, Roman art has given rise to a far more exhilarating scholarly field than Greek art over the last thirty or so years.

28 Cf. Davis' chapter in this volume – with response in Kottman's envoi.

29 Of course, Hegel *did* nonetheless insist upon the importance of studying such materials: cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 1077 (in the context of studying 'primitive' poetry).

to actual case studies plays out the point.³⁰ To this I would add Hegel's extraordinary sensitivity to the importance of media. Unlike so much contemporary art historical scholarship, Hegel's account is premised on how different artistic media function differently, not least the distinction in viewer-object relations between sculpture and painting, or the significance of sculpted relief between a fully plastic medium and two-dimensional pictures (something further developed by Hildebrand and Riegl).³¹

For me, though, the chief methodological appeal of the Hegelian account lies in the associations Hegel draws between art and religion. Fundamental to this grand narrative is the premise that art has 'above all to make the Divine the centre of its representation':³² art, like religion and philosophy, is a practice through which historical transformations are realised and made intelligible; at the same time, art is 'often the key, and in many nations the sole key, to understanding their philosophy and religion'.³³

The point returns us squarely to current work in classical art history. In recent years, some of the most interesting research among classicist circles has developed a related line of critique and explanation. It is nonetheless fair to say, I think, that classicists have not yet reckoned with the Hegelian ancestry to their thinking. One might think here of the work of Jean-Pierre Vernant in the 1970s and 1980s, and above all what Vernant labelled 'the birth of the image' in Archaic and Classical Greece.³⁴ More

30 In the context of classical sculpture specifically (cf. especially Hegel 1975, 701–796), much of Hegel's knowledge is derived from the work of Winckelmann and his immediate successors. The sculptural case study to which Hegel most frequently turns is the statue housed in the Munich Glyptothek, portraying a 'faun' holding the baby Dionysus (cf. *ibid.*, 202, 453, 733, 801). It has often struck me as a strange exemplum – not least since this satyr (with his pointy ears) combines the human with the animalesque, and in a way that speaks against Hegel's comments on the truly classical forms of art and religion (cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 452–453).

31 On the relationship between free-standing and relief sculpture in Greek art, see Hegel 1975, esp. 765, 771. In relief, Hegel argues, 'what conditions the work is the surface, so that the figures stand on one and the same plane, and the three-dimensional character, from which sculpture starts, begins more and more to disappear' (771). The best recent discussion of Classical Greek relief sculpture is Neer 2010a, 182–213, esp. 183–184; cf. also Summers 2002.

32 Hegel 1975, 175.

33 Hegel 1975, 7; cf. the discussion in this volume's introduction, pp. 30–32, 34.

34 See Vernant 1991, esp. 141–192 – with the insightful overview and critical response of Neer 2010b.

recently, we could compare scholarship on what has come to be labelled the ‘ontology’ of ancient Greek and Roman imagery – constituting, in my opinion, some of the most exciting work within the discipline. Particularly relevant is the work of scholars like Jaś Elsner, Milette Gaifman and Verity Platt, concerned with how Greek and Roman art mediated, revealed and made known thinking about the divine.³⁵ To be sure, these studies do not map in any straightforward way onto Hegel’s chronological account: I suspect that all three would shrink from Hegel’s essential talk of art as the ‘sensuous shining forth of the Idea’ [*das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee*]; likewise, as Gaifman and Platt in particular have argued, we can trace a ‘spectrum of iconicity’ throughout the history of Greek art, with artists exploring different strategies of presenting and representing the gods.³⁶ Still, even if such scholars might puzzle over Hegel’s statement that ‘art in Greece has become the supreme expression of the Absolute’, they would likely have less difficulty with the statement that ‘Greek religion is the religion of art itself’.³⁷ Recent scholars, in short, share with Hegel an interest in the history of Greek and Roman art as a history of making known, through material form, what the gods *are*; a view, moreover, that

35 E.g. Elsner 2007b, esp. 1–26 (revising Elsner 2000); Gaifman 2006, 2012 and 2017; and Platt 2011 and 2016a; numerous other studies could be compared, *inter alios* Gladigow, 1985–1986; Versnel 1987; Steiner 2001, 79–134; Tanner 2006, esp. 40–55, 67–96; Osborne 2011: 185–215; Mylonopoulos 2010; Kristensen 2013. For a review of other relevant work, cf. Squire 2009, 113–116, along with Squire 2011, 154–201 (with further bibliography at 222–228). An important reference-point here is Richard Gordon’s article on ‘production and religion in the Graeco-Roman world’, which has striking resonances with Hegel’s arguments (Gordon 1979): for ancient viewers, Gordon suggests, images could be gods, and gods could be images; the visual sphere conflated any straightforward distinction between prototype and representation – between ‘reality’ and ‘imagination’.

36 For the phrase, see Gaifman 2012, 13 (arguing that ‘anthropomorphism and the predominance of figural renditions of gods in Greek art are insufficient reason to assume a uniform and consistent perception of Greek gods’: ‘the human figure as a means by which to visualize the divine was predominant, but not exclusive’, 12); cf. Platt 2011, esp. 24–25. Hegel himself has interesting things to say about many of the representative strategies that have interested modern scholars – among them, animalesque appearances (e.g. Hegel 1975, 444–445), ‘semi-iconic’ herms (e.g. *ibid.*, 641) and aniconic forms (e.g. *ibid.*, 456).

37 Hegel 1975, 438. Compare e.g. Platt 2011, 48: ‘The reciprocal relationship between images and epiphanies thus provided an essential binding element within the representational system of Greek religion.’

the history of Greek and Roman religion is inseparable from the presentations and representations of Graeco-Roman art (the idea expressed in the Hegelian formulation of Greek *Kunstreligion*).³⁸

II.

So much for the pull. But what of the resistance?

We might begin with some general preliminary quandaries. Hegel's account certainly provides a revealing lens for approaching the alleged 'crisis' of visual modernism, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (in the context of our present volume, one need only look to T.J. Clark's chapter). But even here I have some questions about what gets omitted: how, for example, should one reconcile Hegel's account with what has been termed the 'iconic' or 'pictorial turn' of the later twentieth century?³⁹ Then there is the recurring presence of artistic media that should, according to Hegel, be behind us: what, for example, do we do with the history of sculpture?⁴⁰ How do modernist sculptors fit into a Hegelian account of the 'romantic'? For that matter, where exactly should sculpture lie within an account of 'after the beautiful' – a condition, according to Hegel, where 'sculpture is insufficient for giving actuality to

38 Cf. e.g. Gaifman 2015 and Platt 2015; one might note, however, that Hegel does not appear in this *Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*. Hegel discusses Greek 'Kunstreligion' at numerous points in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, and of course elsewhere: cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 102 ('in the case of the Greeks, art was the highest form in which the people represented the gods to themselves and gave themselves some awareness of truth'), 718–719.

39 On the 'pictorial turn', see Mitchell 1994, 11–34, along with e.g. 106 discussing 'the increasing mediatization of reality in postmodernism'; cf. Mitchell 2002, 240–241; compare also Boehm 1995, 13, on the 'iconic turn'. In this connection, I also wonder about the various 'material turns' that have come to play such an important role in the arts and humanities over the last decade, especially over the last fifteen years (cf. *inter alios* Mersch 2002, Gumbrecht 2004, Seel 2005, Bennett and Joyce 2010, Schubert 2010, esp. 1–2; compare also Platt 2016b, in the context of classical art history): if these developments suggest that art and aesthetics have moved *beyond* the Hegelian 'end of art', do they not suggest a retrospective step *backwards* within Hegel's teleology?

40 In that connection, I am often struck by just how little Hegel has to say about sculpture *after* ancient Greece: cf. Hegel 1975, 779, 788–791 (with brief mention of Michelangelo at 790).

this material, so that other arts had to appear in order to realize what sculpture is never able to achieve'²⁴¹ As someone interested in the long classical tradition – not least the self-conscious neoclassicism that Hegel at times touches upon in the *Lectures* – I especially wonder what one makes of knowing engagements with Greek art, and across the *longue durée* of western art history: the recourse to classical sculpture not just as something 'past', but also something 'present', refashionable, and made new ('liquid antiquity', as a recent exhibition in Athens nicely labels it).⁴²

I guess all my questions here really have to do with the teleological linearity of Hegel's account, both with a view to the grand sweep of world history, and with respect to the particular genres of art that Hegel surveys in the second part of his *Lectures*. What so interests me about Graeco-Roman traditions of image-making, for example, is their susceptibility to multiple sorts of historical contextualisation.⁴³ Hegel of course emphasises the figurative and the naturalistic forms of sculpture. But other stories might equally be told. Although Hegel downplays the history of Greek and Roman painting (explicitly declaring classical painting 'backward' in comparison with contemporary sculpture),⁴⁴ for instance, it might be pos-

41 Hegel 1975, 791; cf. Torsen's chapter in this volume. One might note the complete absence of modern sculpture in Pippin 2014.

42 See Holmes and Marta 2017. For some relevant comments here, see Hegel 1975, 264: 'Now to whatever age a work of art belongs, it always carries details in itself which separate it from the characteristics proper to other peoples and other centuries. Poets, painters, sculptors, composers choose materials above all from past times whose civilization, morals, usages, constitution, and religion are different from the whole civilization contemporary with themselves. Such a step backward into the past has ... the great advantage that this departure from the present and its immediacy brings about automatically, owing to our memory, that generalization of material with which art cannot dispense.'

43 For an example of what I mean here, see Platt and Squire 2017, esp. 59–74: the sort of 'self-awareness' that Stoichita 1993 associated with the Renaissance is not an exclusively 'early modern' phenomenon, but can already be witnessed in ancient art – indeed, it stretches right back to the beginnings of Greek figurative traditions.

44 Cf. Hegel 1975, 799–800: 'however excellent even these original [Greek] paintings may have been, we still have to say that, compared with the unsurpassable beauty of their sculptures, the Greeks and Romans could not bring painting to the degree of proper development which was achieved in the Christian Middle Ages and then especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This backwardness of painting in comparison with sculpture in antiquity is quite naturally to be expected, because the inmost heart of the Greek outlook

sible to spin a narrative of that history in proto-modernist terms: without going into technicalities like the history of the ‘Four Styles’ of Pompeian wall-painting, one might think of anecdotes like the one preserved by Pliny, concerning the ‘line-painting’ drawn by Apelles and Protogenes – an *absolutum opus*, in Pliny’s words, ‘containing nothing on its vast surface’ except three ‘almost invisible lines’ of supreme artistic mastery.⁴⁵ My point is not that ancient vignettes like this – which might have us reaching for Clement Greenberg and his comments on modernism’s emphasis on painterly facture, abstraction and two-dimensionality⁴⁶ – need *necessarily* compromise Hegel’s linear, big-picture account: after all, it would be possible to complicate and extend Hegelian categories while leaving intact the general framework of his progressivist teleology. Rather, I worry about *why* a Hegelian history of the classical must be so selective, predicated as it is on the need to explain the ‘romantic’. At the very least, we must reckon with the manipulations and omissions – whether to accommodate them within the linear thrust of the Hegelian account, or else to reconfigure that linear history as something more circular and cyclical.

But what troubles me most about Hegel’s history of art – as indeed his definition of art in the first place – is its theological conditioning. Unlike so much art history, as we have said, Hegel gives religion a pivotal role: for Hegel, the history of art goes hand in hand with the history of religion, revealing through sensuous form the movement of spirit which religion makes intelligible through beliefs. In the first part of this chapter, I declared that such intertwined thinking about art and religion was Hegel’s foremost contribution, and I stick by that assessment. In contrast, so much contemporary art history conspicuously downplays issues of religion and ‘visual theology’:⁴⁷ look up ‘God’ in the index to the best-selling Chicago graduate handbook on *The Critical Terms for Art History*, for example, and you will find just three references – in an entry that ultimately brackets ‘God’ as ‘phallogocentric master signifier’.⁴⁸

corresponds, more than in the case with any other art, precisely with the principle of what sculpture, and sculpture alone, can achieve’ (800).

⁴⁵ Pliny, *Natural History* 35.81–83 (*spatiose nihil aliud continentem quam lineas uisum effugientes*); for discussion and further bibliography, see Squire 2015, 183–184.

⁴⁶ Greenberg 1940; on the programmatic ‘materialist’ importance of the anecdote for approaching ancient aesthetics, cf. Porter 2010, 11–13.

⁴⁷ For the term, see the introduction to this volume, esp. p. 24, n. 2.

⁴⁸ Nelson and Shiff 2003, 502.

My reservation, then, is not that Hegel puts issues of religion at the forefront of his art historical enquiry. Rather, my unease concerns the way that Hegel constructs a universal history of art around his own local theological position;⁴⁹ indeed, how he defines the very essence of ‘religion’ within a peculiarly (and peculiarly post-Lutheran!) Christian conceptual framework.⁵⁰

Intrinsic to this history is the Hegelian premise that the culmination of both art and religion lies not just in Christianity, but specifically in the Christianity of the Protestant Reformation.⁵¹ For Hegel, the Reformation transformed Christianity from the Roman Catholic institutionalised religion of exterior ritual into an introspective, subjective faith. The thinking comes to the fore in the introduction to the *Lectures*, in Hegel’s famous discussion of the ‘pastness’ of art.⁵² Still more explicit is the following

49 For Hegel, of course, the history of religion is ‘analogous’ to that of art, and likewise undergoes a three-part development (Hegel 1975, 83): ‘*First*, earthly natural life in its finitude confronts us on one side; but then, *secondly*, our consciousness makes *God* its object wherein the different of objectivity and subjectivity falls away, until *thirdly*, and lastly, we advance from God as such to worship by the *community*, i.e. to God as living and present in subjective consciousness. These three fundamental differences arise also in the world of art in independent development’.

50 On the restrictive (and themselves theologically coloured) conceptual frameworks that ‘religion’ implies, cf. e.g. Bergunder 2012, with further bibliographic review.

51 On the centrality of the Reformation to Hegel’s teleology, see in particular Eberling 1974, esp. 15–18; Reardon 1977, 58–76, esp. 74–76; and Houlgate 1997, especially 5–15. Hegel studied theology at the Protestant Seminary at Tübingen University between 1788 and 1793: on the formative influence of this period, see Harris 1972, 57–153, Dickey 1987, 157–179 and Pinkard 2000, 19–44. As Pinkard 2000, 1–3 stresses, Hegel was born in Württemberg at a time of renewed antagonism between Catholic and Protestant traditions (following the succession of the Catholic Duke Karl Eugen), and to a family who defined themselves by their Protestant ancestry: the key analysis of the ‘Protestant culture of “Old-Württemberg”’ (ix), and of ‘Hegel in a Protestant cultural context’ (1–32) is Dickey 1987 – focused around his early political writings.

52 Hegel 1975, 8–12 (cf. the introduction to this volume, pp. 34, 38–43): ‘The peculiar nature of artistic production and of works of art no longer fills our highest need. We have got beyond venerating works of art as divine and worshipping them. The impression they make is of a more reflective kind, and what they arouse in us needs a higher touchstone and a different test. Thought and reflection have spread their wings above fine art’ (10).

passage, from Hegel's introduction to the first part of his *Lectures* and discussing 'die Idee des Kunstschönen oder das Ideal':⁵³

but when the urge for knowledge and research, and the need for inner spirituality, instigated the Reformation, religious ideas were drawn away from their wrapping in the element of sense and brought back to the inwardness of heart and thinking. Thus the 'after' of art consists in the fact that there dwells in the spirit the need to satisfy itself solely in its own inner self as the true form for truth to take. Art in its beginnings still leaves over something mysterious, a secret foreboding and a longing, because its creations have not completely set forth their full content for imaginative vision. But if the perfect content has been perfectly revealed in artistic shapes, then the more far-seeking spirit rejects this objective manifestation and turns back into its inner self. This is the case in our own time. We may well hope that art will always rise higher and come to perfection, but the form of art has ceased to be the supreme need of the spirit. No matter how excellent we find the statues of the Greek gods, no matter how we see God the Father, Christ, and Mary so estimably and perfectly portrayed: it is no help; we bow the knee no longer [*unser Knie beugen wir doch nicht mehr*].

The very history of art that Hegel forges – premised on the relationship between the form and content of art – serves as a way of retrospectively making sense of this development. It is the Reformation that delivered the divisive blow to artistic beauty (first in the field of the *visual* arts, but then when it comes to music and poetry too): the Reformation freed art from religion, at once allowing art to traverse a new secular path, while also discrediting its function *as art*.⁵⁴

53 Hegel 1975, 103.

54 As Houlgate 1997, 9, paraphrases, 'What is distinctive about Protestantism is not that it shuns all aesthetic expression as such, but rather that it frees art from dominance by religion and so allows it to become fully *secular*'. And yet romantic art cannot satisfy in the ways that classical art had earlier done: cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 517–527 (romantic art 'as *art* is not the didactic revelation which produces the content of truth for contemplation simply and solely in the form of art; on the contrary, the content of romantic art is already present explicitly to mind and feeling outside the sphere of art ... Therewith externality is regarded as an indifferent element in which spirit has no final trust or persistence', 526).

As Joseph Koerner has argued in his seminal 2004 book, *The Reformation of the Image*, Hegel was one of the first philosophers to see the Reformation as a pivotal turning-point – not only in the history of western thought, but also in the history of art and aesthetics.⁵⁵ In Hegel's terms, the Reformation changes forever our engagements with the material realm. With his emphasis on 'faith alone' (*sola fides*), Martin Luther overturned the Roman Catholic equation of the material and the spiritual. 'To the Lutherans', as Hegel explains in his *Philosophy of History*, 'truth is not a manufactured object';⁵⁶ in Koerner's provocative paraphrase, 'Luther proclaims that faith can only be a commitment to the representation of truth, rather than to the truth embedded in a representation'.⁵⁷ Where mediaeval Catholicism left Christians hungry – claiming through the Eucharist to present the actual body of Christ, as sensuous matter separate from the intellect, and thus destined (in Hegel's terms) ever to 'melt away in the mouth'⁵⁸ – the Reformation is said to have made known the truth of the Spirit's concealment, thereby fulfilling Christianity's spiritual promise.⁵⁹

As Koerner intimates, Hegel's approach to the ontology of the artwork closely echoes the theological defence that Luther himself devised to justify visual imagery. In particular, Hegel's framework of theorising art in terms of 'form' and 'content' – that is, as inner meaning configured in an

55 Koerner 2004, esp. 33–37. Aspects of Koerner's argument are foreshadowed in Koerner 1993, 363–410 and 2002. Cf. e.g. Cottin 1994, 259–311, on the 'anti-aesthetic' brought about by the Reformation, contrasting Lutheran and Calvinist traditions.

56 Hegel 1956, 414.

57 Koerner 2004, 206. In this way, Koerner 2004, 39 posits, 'the Reformation reshaped what the visual image *is*'. On Lutheran attitudes towards images and representation, cf. Squire 2009, 8–11, 15–43 (with summary at 42–43, and further bibliography at 24–25, n. 38). Numerous other recent analyses might be cited here: particularly exhilarating, in my view, are Heuer 2015 and the essays in Heal and Koerner 2017.

58 On the Eucharist, see Hegel 1975, 324–325; cf. Hegel 1948, 252–253, with discussion in Besançon 2000, 217.

59 Arthur Danto anticipated the point when reviewing Koerner 2004 in *The Nation* on 7 March 2005 – namely, that Hegelian aesthetics are themselves formulated *within* the framework of Lutheran theology: 'Reading Koerner's singular and compelling analyses, I felt that I could catch something of the atmosphere that Hegel must have breathed, sitting in the Lutheran church interiors of his native Saxony two and a half centuries later.'

external sensuous appearance⁶⁰ – aligns with a Lutheran understanding of the image as an outward vehicle for an invisible kernel of meaning: an external ‘wrapping’ that ultimately gives way to something interior, spiritual and subjective.⁶¹ For Luther (as opposed to numerous other religious reformers), this approach proved decisive to a theological justification of images, not least in his 1525 tract *Against the Heavenly Prophets*.⁶²

It is this relationship between phenomenal outer form and inner content or meaning – whereby the ‘content of art is the Idea, while its form is the configuration of sensuous material’⁶³ – that provides Hegel with his triadic system for approaching the history of art. Most significantly, the thinking gives rise to Hegel’s delineation of symbolic, classical and romantic *Kunstformen*.⁶⁴

Symbolic art *seeks* that perfect unity of inner meaning and external shape which classical art *finds* in the presentation of substantial individuality to sensuous contemplation, and which romantic art *transcends* in its superior spirituality.

60 For the division between ‘the content, the thing’ [*der Inhalt, die Sache*] on the one hand, and the ‘manner and mode of presentation’ [*die Art und Weise der Darstellung*] on the other, see e.g. Hegel 1975, 17–19 (discussing the work of A.L. Hirt and J.H. Meyer). ‘In a work of art we begin with what is immediately presented to us and only then ask what its meaning or content is’, Hegel 1975, 20, concludes. ‘The former, the external appearance, has no immediate value for us; we assume behind it something inward, a meaning whereby the external appearance is endowed with spirit. It is to this, its soul, that the external points ... [The work of art] should disclose an inner life, feeling, soul, a content and spirit, which is just what we call the significance of a work of art.’

61 On the resulting ‘linguistification’ of the image in Lutheran art, cf. Koerner 2004, 151–152; on the underlying premise of *sola fides*, cf. *ibid.*, 38–51. ‘The drastically formulaic character of painting *as painting*’, Koerner 2004, 235, concludes, ‘suits a religion where the real truth, by definition, lies not in faithfulness to a world but in faith in words.’ For the abiding influence of Lutheran views here, cf. Belting 1998, esp. 1–32, discussing not only how, in the wake of the Reformation, images were deemed ‘a threat to Christian values’ in Northern Germany, but also how ‘the painted image had to be censored, justified and ultimately dominated through theoretical discourse’.

62 For discussion, see especially Koerner 2004, 159–164; cf. e.g. Michalski 1993, 1–42.

63 Hegel 1975, 70.

64 Hegel 1975, 302; cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 613. On Hegel’s tripartite system of *Kunstformen*, see also the introduction to this volume, pp. 34–42.

In the first, or 'symbolic', stage, associated with the 'oriental' east, there is wholly arbitrary relationship between external expression and internal content: 'the character of the symbolic consists precisely in the ever purely imperfect unification of the soul of meaning with its corporeal shape'.⁶⁵ Classical art reconfigures that relationship, so that the divine is now embodied through the image of the idealised, human body (hence Hegel's definition of the classical as 'a unification of the content with its entirely adequate shape');⁶⁶ indeed, it is precisely this 'entirely harmonious unity of content and form'⁶⁷ that lends classical art its supremacy as *art*.⁶⁸ The third, romantic, form of art, by contrast, made known that the very spiritedness of such idealisation is beyond sensuous formal expression, leading to a 'beauty of inwardness' [*Schönheit der Innigkeit*]⁶⁹ – a transcen-

65 Hegel 1975, 426. Cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 439: 'symbolic art tosses about in a thousand forms without being able to hit upon the plainly adequate one; with an imagination that runs riot without proportion and definition, it gropes around in order to adapt to the meaning sought the shapes that ever remain alien'.

66 Hegel 1975, 427. Cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 482: 'by being beauty in classical art, the inherently determinate divine character appears not only spiritually but also externally in its bodily form, i.e. in a shape visible to the eyes as well as to the spirit'. On the importance of the human bodily form here, see e.g. *ibid.*, 433 ('This shape is essentially the human form because the external human form is alone capable of revealing the spiritual in a sensuous way'), with Peters' chapter in this volume.

67 Hegel 1975, 301. Cf. *ibid.*, 9: 'Only one sphere and stage of truth is capable of being represented in the element of art. In order to be a genuine content for art, such truth must in virtue of its own specific character be able to go forth into [the sphere of] sense and remain adequate to itself there. This is the case, for example, with the gods of Greece ...'.

68 Hegel 1975, 79: 'The classical form of art has attained the pinnacle of what illustration by art could achieve, and if there is something defective in it, the defect is just art itself and the restrictedness of the sphere of art'. Numerous other soundbites could be cited: e.g. *ibid.*, 436: 'As regards the actualization of classical art in history, it is scarcely necessary to remark that we have to look for it in the Greeks. Classical beauty with its infinite range of content, material, and form is the gift vouchsafed to the Greek people, and we must honour this people for having produced art in its supreme vitality'; cf. *ibid.*, 719–720.

69 For a clear articulation of the thinking, cf. Hegel 1975, 518: 'This spiritual elevation is the fundamental principle of romantic art. Bound up with it at once is the essential point that at this final stage of art the beauty of the classical ideal, and therefore beauty in its very own shape and its most adequate content, is no longer the ultimate thing. For at the stage of romantic art the spirit knows

dence of content over form that itself follows in the model of Christ's own Passion, Resurrection and Ascension.⁷⁰ The ensuing transformation is at once religious and artistic.⁷¹

Abandoning this [classical] principle, the romantic form of art cancels the undivided unity of classical art because it has won a content which goes beyond and above the classical form of art and its mode of expression. This content – to recall familiar ideas – coincides with what Christianity asserts of God as a spirit, in distinction from the Greek religion which is the essential and most appropriate content for classical art ... Now if in this way what was implicit at the previous stage, the unity of divine and human nature, is raised from an *immediate* to a *known* unity, the *true* element for the realization of this content is no longer the sensuous immediate existence of the spiritual in the bodily form of man, but instead the *inwardness of self-consciousness*. Now Christianity brings God before our imagination as spirit, not as an individual, particular spirit, but as absolute in spirit and in truth. For this reason it retreats from the sensuousness of imagination into spiritual inwardness and makes this, and not the body, the medium and existence of truth's content ... In this

that its truth does not consist in its immersion in corporeality; on the contrary, it only becomes sure of its truth by withdrawing from the external into its own intimacy with itself and positing external reality as an existence inadequate to itself. Even if, therefore, this new content too comprises in itself the task of making itself *beautiful*, still beauty in the sense hitherto expounded remains for it something subordinate, and beauty becomes the *spiritual* beauty of the absolute inner life as inherently infinite spiritual subjectivity'. On Hegelian ideas about the *Schönheit der Innigkeit*, see especially Pippin's chapter in this volume.
70 Cf. Hegel 1975, 505–506: 'The Divine, God himself, has become flesh, was born, lived, suffered, died, and is risen. This is material which art did not invent; it was present outside art; consequently, art did not derive it from its own resources but found it ready for configuration' (505). For the fundamental remove of romantic art and religion from the classical, cf. *ibid.*, 72: 'The Greek god is not abstract but individual, closely related to the natural [human] form. The Christian God too is indeed a concrete personality, but is *pure* spirituality and is to be known as *spirit* and in spirit. His medium of existence is therefore essentially inner knowledge and not the external natural form through which he can be represented only imperfectly and not in the whole profundity of his nature.'

71 Hegel 1975, 79–80.

way romantic art is the self-transcendence of art but within its own sphere and in the form of art itself.

What matters in post-Reformation romantic art, it follows, is ‘the inner conviction, feeling, and conception of this eternal truth’ that exists independently of artistic form – in short, the *‘faith* which bears witness to itself of the absolute truth and thereby imparts it to the inner life of mind’.⁷² It is in this connection that Hegel diagnoses the ‘pastness’ of art – its loss of genuine truth: ‘transferred into our *ideas* instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place’, art ‘considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past’.⁷³ ‘We have got beyond venerating works of art as divine and worshipping them’, as he puts it: ‘the impression they make is of a more reflective kind’.⁷⁴

As someone whose day-job is centred around the historiography of Greek and Roman art, one of the things that interests me about this account is the way in which it constructs the classical as at once the supreme form of art, while also an ancestral antitype to the modern. The artistic ideals of pagan antiquity are forever lost to us, Hegel implies, and yet they amount to everything that Protestantism has forbidden, denied and

72 Hegel 1975, 535. ‘A developed faith’, Hegel continues, ‘consists in the immediate conviction that the conception of the factors in this history suffices to bring truth before consciousness’. ‘But if it is a matter of the consciousness of *truth*, then the *beauty* of the appearance, and the representation, is an accessory and rather indifferent, for the truth is present for consciousness independently of art.’

73 Hegel 1975, 11. Art, Hegel explains, has lost its higher vocation as *art*, merging into philosophy – that is, ‘for knowing philosophically what art is’. Art may no longer satisfy as it did in the past. Yet it lends itself to intellectualisation, and precisely with regards to the relationship between form and content: ‘What is now aroused in us by works of art is not just immediate enjoyment but our judgement also, since we subject to our intellectual consideration (i) the content of art, and (ii) the work of art’s means of presentation, and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of both to one another.’ One might add that such philosophical interrogation forms precisely the subject of the *Lectures on Aesthetics* themselves (cf. Hegel 1975, 1236–1237: ‘Now at the end we have arranged every essential category of the beautiful and every essential form of art into a philosophical garland, and weaving it is one of the worthiest tasks that philosophy is capable of completing’, 1236). On the Hegelian relationship between art and philosophy, cf. Gardner’s chapter in this volume.

74 Hegel 1975, 10.

negated. It was E.M. Butler, in her 1935 study of *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, who declared that the Hellenophilia of the German Enlightenment lay in the promise of Greek art supplying artists, poets and critics with the ‘absolute beauty’ of which Luther had deprived them.⁷⁵ What we find in Hegel, I think, is a system of charting the history of art that duly recognises the point – and formalises it in a narrative of progress. In essence, Hegel’s triadic system for charting the history of art boils down to the history of the pre-Greek, Greek and post-Greek. ‘Classical beauty’, at least for Hegel, ‘has for its inner being the free independent meaning, i.e. not a meaning of this or that but what means [*das Bedeutende*] itself and therefore intimates [*Deutende*]:’⁷⁶ the classical is thus defined around the very conciliation of form and meaning that romantic art transcends;⁷⁷ by extension, the symbolic is duly constructed as a way of explaining the origins, emergence and supreme perfection of the classical.⁷⁸

One might venture still further. If the *Lectures on Aesthetics* view the classical as embodying the absolute beauty that Protestantism dispensed with, they thereby also create a category of supreme beauty based on *actual* objects (as opposed to the subjective experience advocated by Kant, centred around the beauties of nature). The classical – and Greek sculpture in particular – comprises an ideal of beauty that is denied to the romantic. And yet those forms can still be seen, witnessed and experienced – they are material and present, even if philosophically surpassed by the spiritual beauties of Protestantism.

75 Butler 1935, esp. 4–5. Cf. Mattick 1993, 3, on how ‘the discovery of modern aestheticians of the beginning of their discipline in the mid-1700s ... is almost invariably accompanied by the identification of an earlier origin in classical Greece’.

76 Hegel 1975, 427. Cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 517: ‘the perfection of art reached its peak here precisely because the spiritual was completely drawn through its external appearance; in this beautiful unification it idealized the natural and made it into an adequate embodiment of spirit’s own substantial individuality. Therefore classical art became a conceptually adequate representation of the Ideal, the consummation of the realm of beauty. Nothing can be or become more beautiful.’

77 Cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 309: in classical art ‘the significance, the meaning, is no other than that which actually lies in the external shape, since both sides correspond perfectly’.

78 Hence the recurrent emphasis that the classical is itself the *result* of the symbolic, developing out of that earlier prehistory (e.g. Hegel 1975, 441–442); indeed, the classical ‘has the multiple intermediate and transitional stages of the symbolic as its presupposition’ (*ibid.*, 317).

Where, then, does my difficulty lie? My unease lies in the assumed *telos* that gives Hegel his starting-point – the way in which the *Lectures* end up devising a system for theorising art around a particular theological problem. The whole approach for making sense of art in the *Lectures* is predicated not just on a discrediting of matter, but on the problematic of relating artistic form to content. To put the point another way, we might say that Hegel’s retrospective examination of what art was amounts to an attempt to explain his own theological difficulties with coming to terms with what post-Reformation art *is* (or rather, is said to be): ultimately, everything rests on his position that ‘the Divine, explicitly regarded as unity and universality, is essentially only present to thinking and, as in itself imageless, is not susceptible of being imaged and shaped by imagination’.⁷⁹

For Hegel, of course, religion is one of the ways – like philosophy and art themselves – in which spirit makes itself known, in the form of the figurative images of belief (rather than in the form of philosophical concepts or sensuous artistic matter). And Hegel has a lot of very specific things to say elsewhere about Christianity, Luther and Protestantism: there is a familiar joke among Hegelians that Hegel is a member of a Christian sect of which he is the sole member. My point, though, is that Hegel’s thinking about the *pastness* of art is staked on theological ideas that it attempts teleologically to explain: the *Lectures* amount to a retrospective attempt to explain the rise of a specific, theologically coloured understanding of the world, of salvation through inner faith, of subjectivity removed from matter. Hegel recognises the particular Protestant flavour of his thinking. But he insists that alternative ‘world-views’ are inherently either ‘past’ or else less ‘developed’ than his own. There can be no way ‘back’.⁸⁰

It is therefore no help to him [the artist] to adopt again, as that substance, so to say, past world-views, i.e. to propose to root himself firmly in one of these ways of looking at things, e.g. to turn Roman Catholic as in recent times many have done for art’s sake in order to give stability to their mind and to give the character of something absolute to the specifically limited character of their artistic product in itself.

⁷⁹ Hegel 1975, 175.

⁸⁰ Hegel 1975, 606.

According to Hegel, our modern condition has emptied the material realm of its truth or persuasiveness. Whether ‘we nowadays propose to make the subject of a statue or a painting a Greek god, or, Protestants as we are today, the Virgin Mary’, the venture is futile: ‘we are not seriously in earnest with this material’.⁸¹

Does this theological conditioning matter? Or rather is it possible to subscribe to Hegel’s account while holding at arm’s length the theology that underpins it – as has been argued, for example, of Hegel’s cultural prejudices, Eurocentric chauvinism and Prussian triumphalism?⁸² Here I think we get to the nub of German Idealism: namely, the envisaging of history as the forward-marching movement of Spirit, which itself underpins the teleological drive of the Hegelian system. One might argue that the spiritual advance that Protestantism makes known finds other sorts of expression (so as thereby to corroborate, as it were, the turn to the inner self): notice in the long passage cited above (p. 140), for example, how Hegel frames the Reformation not only in terms of the ‘need for inner spirituality’, but also ‘the urge for knowledge and research’ – the birth of the new sciences, new forms of rational criteria for judgments, a new social and ethical world, the rise of the modern subject, etc.⁸³ Still, if we are to operate *within* the system of Hegelian teleology, it is simply not possible to opt out of his particular view of theological progress, with all its beliefs about the higher truth of Protestant spirituality.

It follows, I think, that the force of Hegel’s narrative of art past, present and future ultimately depends upon subscribing to a set of theological tenets – upon belonging to that all-important ‘we’ of Hegel’s early nineteenth-century, Prussian Protestant community. Likewise, Hegel’s very understanding of what art is – as something communicative, *das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee* – is premised on a theology that privileges the conceptual, speculative and immaterial: once again, if one operates with the teleology of Hegelian Idealism, the retrospective account of what art *was* depends upon a particular categorical reification of what art *is*.

⁸¹ Hegel 1975, 603–604.

⁸² Cf. the introduction to this volume, pp. 45–50.

⁸³ Cf. e.g. § 802–803 of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, with Kalkavage 2007, 441–442. The classic sociological interpretation of the Reformation is Weber 1985 (deeply influenced, of course, by Hegelian views). On the influence of humanistic thought on the theology of the Reformation, cf. e.g. McGrath 2004, esp. 34–66.

In this connection, it is important to note that Hegel's narrative entails not only a history about the 'forms' of art (the symbolic, classical and romantic), but also a hierarchy about different 'kinds' of art (architecture, sculpture, painting, music and the different strands of poetry). For Hegel, the Lutheran commitment to the subjective 'inner life' removed from material trappings translates into a commitment to poetry as the most developed stage of art,⁸⁴ a belief, as Luther famously put it, that 'Christendom will not be known by *sight*, but by faith, and faith has to do with things not seen'.⁸⁵ That hierarchy matters, once again, precisely because of the ideology that underpins it.⁸⁶ Re-reading the *Lectures* after a related project on Lessing's *Laocoon*, that foundational 1766 treatise on the 'limits of painting and poetry',⁸⁷ I was struck by just how much

84 In the 'cerebral, learned sort of religion' of the Reformers, as Carlos Eire puts it, there was a profound shift 'from the visual to the verbal as a means of communication': the word of God alone was allowed to 'stand as an image of the invisible reality of the spiritual dimension' (Eire 1986, 315–16); cf. e.g. Belting 1994, 465, on the Protestant task of rediscovering 'the primal sound of the word, free of all the dross and errors of papism, and to teach it to the congregation'.

85 For Luther's comments here (on Hebrews 11:1), see Koerner 2004, 201–211, esp. 210. One might compare Luther's famous declaration that 'Christ's kingdom is a hearing kingdom, not a seeing kingdom; for the eyes do not lead and guide us to where we know and find Christ, but rather the ears do this' (quoted in Koerner 2004, 41). Zwingli would express the sentiment more vehemently (cf. Thiessen 2005, 136): 'Now let someone show us where [the saints] have painted or copied this faith. We cannot show it save in their hearts. Therefore it must follow that we also must learn that faith is necessary in our hearts if we want to do anything pleasing to God. This we cannot learn from walls but only from the gracious pulling of God out of his own word.'

86 For the 'ideological' underpinnings of every attempt to distinguish between 'words' and 'image' see Mitchell 1986, on the 'dialectical struggle in which the opposed terms take on different ideological roles and relationships at different moments in history' (98); cf. Mitchell 1994, 5 ('There are no "purely" visual or verbal arts, though the impulse to purify media is one of the central utopian gestures of modernism'); Mitchell 2003.

87 The handiest German edition of Lessing's essay, first published in 1766, is Lessing 2012; for an English translation, see Lessing 1984. Hegel's longest discussion of the Laocoon statue-group comes at Hegel 1975, 769 (cf. Rush, this volume, p. 168): Hegel comments on German discussions of the group over the last 'forty or fifty' years, mentioning Winckelmann (but not Lessing) explicitly; Hegel was likewise the first to situate the statue within the later history of Greek art – arguing that 'the step from the innocence and greatness of art to

Hegel owes to the Protestant hue of Lessing's 'limits' – not only Lessing's championing of poetry over painting,⁸⁸ but also his deeply logocentric understanding of both arts as signs that appeal to the imagination, to *Vorstellung*.⁸⁹ Like Lessing, Hegel argues for the supreme advancement of poetry over other kinds of art, because poetry does not set before our eyes the thing itself in an external trapping, 'but gives us on the contrary an *inner* vision and feeling of it'.⁹⁰ It follows, at least for Hegel, that:⁹¹

The power of poetry's way of putting things consists therefore in the fact that poetry gives shape to a subject-matter within, without proceeding to express it in actual visible shapes or in series of melodies; poetry thereby makes the external object produced by the other arts into an internal one which the spirit itself externalizes for the imagination in the form that this internal object and is to keep within the spirit.

mannerism has here already been taken'. While the *Lectures on Aesthetics* are concerned with the divergent resources of different visual media, complicating the *Laocoon's* grouping of sculpture and painting together, Lessing's arguments about the *spatial* bodies of images and the *temporal* actions of poetry prove foundational to his argument (cf. e.g. Hegel 1975, 702–704, 854–855, 981–982, 959–960); indeed, Hegel's essential qualification of Lessing's argument lies in the understanding that, while sculpture and painting are both 'spatial' (cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 913), painting reduces the 'spatial dimensions of sculpture to a flat surface' (*ibid.*, 890).

88 See e.g. Gombrich 1957, 140: 'It has often been said that Lessing did not know much about art. I am afraid the truth may be even more embarrassing to an historian of art ...: he had not much use for art ... The more one reads *Laocoon*, the stronger becomes the impression that it was not so much a book about as against the visual arts'; cf. Mitchell 1986, 95–115.

89 For discussion, see Squire 2017a (with detailed further bibliography), along with Hien 2013. For Hegel's talk of *Vorstellung* in the context of poetry, see e.g. Hegel 1975, 1035–1036; cf. *ibid.*, 89, 622–623, 626–627, 966–967, 961–962, 971–972, 1001–1003, 1111–1112.

90 Hegel 1975, 1111. Cf. *ibid.*, 997–998, on how the poet 'has problems which the other arts are not required to face or solve to the same extent', since 'poetry lives purely in the sphere of inner imagination ...': 'while availing itself of a means of external communication just as these [other] sphere do, [poetry] avails itself of language; and by the use of language it stands on a ground of conception and expression different from that of the visual arts and music'.

91 Hegel 1975, 1001.

Given the theological conditioning of Hegel's account, poetry *has* to occupy a more 'developed' stage of spiritual progress than the visual arts of sculpture and painting. His progressivist narrative of artistic development, in short, is premised upon a logocentric assumption that gives pride of artistic place to the verbal over the visual.

Now, it is of course possible to subscribe to the religious underpinnings of Hegel's account: one might *believe* them to be true.⁹² By extension, it is possible to think – as Hegel does – that the very history of religion forms part of a larger unfolding of human discovery and self-consciousness: whether or not one believes in the theological tenets of post-Reformation Christianity, one might therefore assent to the tenets of Hegel's Idealist philosophy. But such claims are in and of themselves theological: they are premised on the history of religion as one of progressive advancement, reaching its zenith in the Reformed Christianity of the modern day. From this perspective, the *Lectures on Aesthetics* attempt to explain a universal history of art around a particular ideological position about religious progress: ultimately, they strive to legitimate an ideology of art and religion through a history of their intertwined, forward-marching progress.

* * * * *

At the beginning of this paper, I said that my relationship with Hegel was bipolar. Whether as therapy or as confessional, my chapter has been an attempt to vocalise that ambivalence. I remain in awe of Hegel's big-picture narrative, its breadth, its explanatory power. Ultimately, though, I worry about charting history – whether of art, religion or philosophy – in Hegelian teleological terms. One part of this unease – from a classicist's perspective – must be about what historically gets squeezed out from our account: the ideologies that underlie every attempt to chart a history of artistic style, form and thinking (particularly conspicuous to someone concerned with the history and historiography of the Greek and Roman past). But another part of my worry concerns the definition of the artwork

92 Cf. e.g. Besançon 2000: after opening with an epigraph from Hegel, Besançon declares that Hegel 'articulated before I did, and infinitely better than I, the main points of my thesis' (5). Something similar might be said about Koerner 2004, arguing that Christianity was 'iconoclastic from the start' – and that the Reformation was therefore an inevitability (Koerner 2004, 12–13; cf. Koerner 2002, 189–200).

with which Hegel leaves us. There can be no doubt that Hegel diagnoses so many of the problems that still beleaguer the discipline of art history in particular – the insufficiency of our frameworks to deal with the ‘power of images’ (in Freedberg’s term), or else (to cite Gumbrecht) to reckon with their ‘presence’;⁹³ likewise, one might think of W.J.T. Mitchell’s famous assessment at the end of *What do Pictures Want: The Lives and Loves of Images* – ‘what pictures want from us, what we have failed to give them, is an idea of visuality adequate to their ontology’.⁹⁴ In diagnosing that modern condition, though, I wonder if Hegel might not himself be part of the problem: his descriptive history of art normalises the artwork as ‘empty’ form subjugated to spiritual content – an object that has us look beyond it, a site for subjective reification, a prompt for philosophical speculation.⁹⁵

Perhaps this paper has to do with the classicist’s desire to imagine things otherwise. As noted at the outset, it no doubt also has to do with the author’s Roman Catholic upbringing – a predisposition to read Hegel, as it were, with a whiff of incense lingering between the pages. At the very least, however, this brief intervention has been an attempt to put theology back on the table – not as teleological starting-point, nor indeed as spiritual revelation, but as loaded ideological construction.

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93 Freedberg 1989; Gumbrecht 2004. Cf. also the essays in Maniura and Shepherd 2006 and Latour and Weibel 2002.

94 Mitchell 2005, 47.

95 On Hegel’s role in implementing such ‘speculative theories of art’, see Schaeffer 2000, esp. 3–13: ‘Through our addiction to the (philosophical) mirage of Art, we have thus cut ourselves off from the multiple and changing reality of the arts and art works; by claiming that Art was more important than this or that work, here and now, we have weakened our aesthetic sensibility (and – often – our critical sense); by reducing art works to metaphysical hieroglyphs, we have rarefied our paths to pleasure and denied the cognitive diversity – and thus the richness – of the arts’ (13); Schaeffer advocates instead a return to Kantian aesthetics (298–308). One might compare e.g. Dillenberger 1999, 189–191, on how, if art historians want to achieve a ‘learned modality of seeing’, we must seek to ‘*overcome* the legacy of the reformations’ (quotation from 191).

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FRED RUSH

STILL LIFE AND THE END OF PAINTING

In memoriam Arthur C. Danto

Hegel's account of the historical-conceptual development of painting culminates with exceedingly compressed thoughts concerning Flemish and Dutch art of the so-called 'Golden Age', roughly during and just after the War of Dutch Independence (c. 1568–1672). The new Dutch Republic saw its art centres shift from the south in Flanders to the northern provinces and a flourishing of painting due to the Republic's emerging economic status. Dutch painting in this period is dominated by genre – the Dutch invented the practice – a fact tailor-made for Hegelian treatment and on which Hegel places special emphasis.¹ The standard hierarchy of subject matter is fully in play: history painting at the top, portraiture in second position, depictions of everyday life in third and still lifes at the bottom. Hegel's understanding of art's and, more specifically, painting's progressive tendency subtly inverts this art-historical hierarchy to yield a schema in which Dutch still lifes can claim to hold the most philosophical interest for Hegel.² Hegel does not say this precisely, but I shall argue the case from what I take to be the core precepts that govern Hegel's account of painting at its 'end'. The point I wish to establish, or at least make plausible, is that

1 Hegel 1971b, XV: 60–61/Hegel 1975, 832–833. I cite Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of art as they are published in Hotho's compilation of lectures from the 1820s. I have also consulted the 1820/1 and 1823 lectures, which are newly available in the ongoing but incomplete standard scholarly edition, *Gesammelte Werke*. Likewise, I have compared the Hotho edition with the 1826 lectures. All versions are remarkably similar on the major points treated in this chapter, although there are differences in wording, emphasis and example. When such differences are material, I point them out. Citation of the original German source is followed by citation of the most adequate available English translation.

2 Both the English *still life* and the German *Stilleben* derive from the Dutch *stilleven*.

for Hegel still lifes of this period are the most indicative paintings of the final resources of painting *qua* painting. They are so because they are the most 'subjective' form of painting that does not compromise what Hegel takes to be inherent to painting as a mode of art and inherent to subjectivity as a mode of agency. I enter this qualification to leave open for Hegel, as I think one must, cases of painting that are even more subjective, but are so in ways that compromise what he holds to be the inherent nature of painting. In other words, the term 'painting' [*Malerei*] is, without further qualification, ambiguous for him as between two senses. On the one hand, the term is descriptive, referring to the action and result of artistic creation by means of paint and canvas. On the other hand, the term is evaluative, picking out from amongst the paintings in the first sense of the term those that pass whatever muster Hegel thinks is required to count as an expression of the inherent task of painting relative to its essential end. Thus, the archetypal Hegelian thought that a painting in the first sense could fail to be a painting in the second sense.

Hegel is a systematic philosopher of a particularly demanding sort, and it can often seem that to say something sensible about some aspect of his thought one must say everything sensible about all aspects of his thought. That is an impossibility, but one can begin appreciating the important role that still lifes play for Hegel's discussion of the essence of painting – for he is an essentialist when it comes to questions of the meaning of painting – by clarifying the basic terms of his account of beauty.³ In itself that is hardly a very controversial point of departure. But I believe it is a bit more non-standard to seek initial orientation by looking to Hegel's treatment of *natural* beauty. This is because Hegel can seem dismissive of the very phenomenon of beauty in nature. In part this is why he states at the outset of the *Lectures on Aesthetics* that he is retaining the term 'aesthetics' for the sake of convenience only. If 'aesthetics' refers to an approach to beauty that accords pride of place to beauty given in nature, not that made by humanity [*Geist*], aesthetics is of decidedly secondary importance.

As a general matter, understanding Hegel's views on beauty is crucial on account of the fact that beauty is the primary metric of artistic progression for him. Some may contest this point; however, the four extant

³ 'Beauty' is not *sensu stricto* a logical concept for Hegel – it does not figure in the demonstrations of either the *Science of Logic* or the *Encyclopaedia*; nevertheless, the structure of beautiful things expresses the Idea in its interlocked three phases: particularity, universality and individuality.

student transcripts of Hegel's Berlin aesthetics lectures do not deviate from one another at all in this regard: fine art just *is* beautiful art [*schöne Kunst*]; in point of fact, calling something 'fine art' for Hegel is identical with calling such art beautiful, as the German word for both makes clear. And it is only fine art that Hegel cares about – fine/beautiful art is the only art that qualifies as the cognitive type 'Art' for him. This means that one may substitute 'beautiful art' *salva veritate* for any occurrence of 'Art'. This is not to say of course that all art has the same degree of beauty nor does it follow that beauty is not differently instantiated in different sub-types of art (e.g. beautiful sculpture is not beautiful *in the same way* as is beautiful music). Hegel charts the advance and decline of particular artistic forms – art epochs, art types, genres, even something like individual artists' styles on the rare occasions when he talks about them – in terms of beauty. For each form there are two epitomes, two points of special conceptual importance. The first of these is the point at which what Hegel takes to be the inherent potential of the form is fully actualised in those terms. Perhaps the illustrious and illustrative case involves Hegel's claims for Attic sculpture in the Classical period of the fifth and fourth centuries BC. This is classical art and sculpture at their peaks and this means the most beautiful classical art and most beautiful sculpture. It is a well-known if not notorious feature of Hegel's account of such 'peaks' that he says that the relevant form of art has ended with that peak. It has reached its zenith in terms of its inherent potential. This means neither that the art form stops at that point nor does it mean that there cannot be progression of a sort in the art form after that point. But that progression will not be one that can be indexed to the inherent potential of the art form. For with potential comes limitation. Any such progression will be progression in other terms and will express the operation of those terms as a limiting condition on the art. The second epitome has to do with this idea of an art form's life in its expiration, in its passing out of its maturity and moving towards the point when it can no longer even minimally condition the terms of its progression. This 'second end' of the art form is the final end of the form in question. It is exceedingly important to add to this account that 'being past' for Hegel is inherently imperfect in grammatical aspect. Art that is past is not simply dead nor is it merely of antiquarian or nostalgic interest. Such art – indeed Hegel holds ultimately all art – is always with *Geist* in its being-past. Hegel's doctrines of recollection [*Wiederholung/Erinnerung*] and reconciliation [*Versöhnung*] require this result.

Hegel's treatment of painting conforms to this schema. Considered

relative to what Hegel takes to be its inherent end, painting will have a zenith at which it fully actualises its potential. And, nearing its philosophically appointed end, painting will be less beautiful than it was at that zenith and, therefore, less artful than it was at that prior point of equilibrium. But such painting will also be more advanced than 'perfect painting', more advanced that is by incorporating in it, through sensuous adaptation, elements that are more conceptually advanced than painting (e.g. music, poetry, philosophy).

Hegel holds that beauty is the sensuous manifestation of 'the Idea' and treats nature as the first 'existence' of the Idea.⁴ 'Art' is a mode of human self-understanding through making intelligible and, thus, is a mode of cognition. Sense experience is thus, one might say, the domain in which art makes significance manifest. Beauty is the formal element in this domain in terms of which the Idea is manifest and that towards which art progresses is ultimately extramundane relative to the sensuous domain – i.e. philosophical thought, or a full specification of the Idea. This full specification will be non-sensuous but reaching that plenitude is at certain stages of development dependent on the domain of the sensuous and, even past that point, is entangled with the sensuous through dialectical retrospection. The more philosophical any art is, the less beautiful it is, for the sensuous mode of the Idea is distended by attempts within the form of beauty to accommodate non-sensuous content.

As to the end-state of *painting*, one might say, in line with the presentation above, that the proximate force that installs Dutch still life at the end of painting is the dawning of the conception of a kind of painting that takes as its principle the attempt to push the native means of painting to the point of exhaustion. This idea need not be explicit as such in the intent of the artist, for instance, as it might be in a more recognisably modern avant-garde context. Indeed, the idea will be present in terms of an increasingly confident artistic practice, a practice that does have the express idea behind it that painting can do nearly *everything*. Looking back on such practice from a more advantaged (according to Hegel) point in the dialectical progression of art, one can always cast what is driving the art in the terms of the successor form. To do so in this case yields the observation that end-state painting is painting that, as much

4 Hegel 1971b, XIII: 157–166 / Hegel 1975, 116–117.

as is possible for it, approximates the condition of music.⁵ More specifically colour, which, as we shall see later, Hegel nominates as the primary beauty-bearing formal characteristic of Dutch painting, functions as tonality functions in musical structure.⁶

LIFE, LIVELINESS AND BEAUTY

Standard theoretical conceptions of beauty of the generation prior to Hegel are recognisably neoclassical in the sort of structure they require on the part of beautiful objects. One finds diverse formulations of the same point: beautiful things stand out from their mundane counterparts in that they have a particularly intense and rich structural integrity. More precisely, beautiful objects achieve an optimal balance between internal complexity and unity. That is, the parts of such objects are not so diversely complex that they undermine the unity of the object, and the object is not so simple and univocal so as to cause its parts to be reduced to it and lose their inherent interest. This harmonised unity animates the mind of the aesthetic subject, with the overall experienced effect of easy yet diversified perception. The ease in question does not merely allow the object to pass through consciousness; rather, the object seems tailor-made to grab one's attention in a way that makes that attention linger of its own force, ever deepening one's perceptual engagement in the thing. Everyday concern with the thing and its relation to other matters drops away, leaving one with an entity that is experienced as singular, as being self-sufficient relative to its appearance. Hegel qualifiedly, but only qualifiedly, embraces this conception of the structure of beauty.

Just here, turning to Hegel's account of *natural* beauty can be clarifying. Hegel holds that natural beauty is inferior to artistic beauty because

5 Hegel's account of the succession of art types – architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry – assigns the principle of succession (and by extension, regression) to a metaphysical variant of the idea of *ekphrasis*. A successor form is a successor, in part, due to its ability to render its precursor in its own terms. Notwithstanding such superior wherewithal, such rendering cannot reconstruct without remainder the precursor in the precursor's own terms.

6 See Hegel 1968, XXVIII.1: 178. Hegel holds that sight is inherently limited when it comes to portraying 'the inner', which is truly the province of hearing. Music is time become corporeal, which is to say sound. See Hegel 1971b, X: 104–105 / Hegel 2007, 74–75.

the beauty of art is an intended result of a making – a beautiful work of art is beautiful because its beauty has human agency as its cause, even if the work is not meant to be beautiful. Natural beauty is by comparison incidental. Hegel holds that beautiful nature is not so in itself. He writes that nature is only beautiful *for us*.⁷ That is not a throwaway, of course, and one might expend significant conceptual effort in expounding on the conditions under which this can be the case at all, as did Kant. Yet, it impresses Hegel that Kant argues that in order to find a natural object beautiful one must consider it as if it *were* art, revealing thereby the force of the idea of agency in the natural realm, the realm of ‘purposiveness without purpose’. Kant certainly embraces a version of neoclassical variety in unity paradigm, in which it is the feeling of the mind instantiating such a harmony that is strictly speaking beautiful. Schelling, from whom some of Hegel’s main views on the philosophical significance of art proximately descend, holds that there is a telling isomorphism between organic conceptual structure and organic composite beauties that is crucial for aesthetic thought.⁸ These are but two aspects of one and the same system: human cognitive responsiveness in its organic structure is a very articulated instance of the very same structure that underlies the internal constitution of objects: *dynamic* relations of part to whole in progressive development.

This idea that beauty is a dynamic, not a static, unity is of decisive importance for Hegel, which becomes amply apparent when one turns to the first precept in his account of the beauty of nature: that only living things, or ‘life’ [*Leben*] can be beautiful.⁹ Indeed the livelier a thing is the more beautiful it is. ‘Liveliness’ [*Lebendigkeit*] is the lens through which Hegel’s dynamic modification of the neoclassical conception of beauty is best viewed. ‘Life’ is a signal concept for Hegel, one that originates in his early writings;¹⁰ makes a brief but important appearance in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*;¹¹ figures prominently in the part of the *Science*

7 Hegel 1971b, XIII: 167 / Hegel 1975, 123–124.

8 I am not using the term ‘isomorphism’ here to denote a one-to-one mapping of items in one cognitive domain onto items in another such domain. The idea rather is one of structural overlap.

9 See Hegel 1971b, XIII: 167 / Hegel 1975, 123. Hegel does not make the assertion as such, but inferences drawn from the properties of organisms, as Hegel understands them, towards this conclusion seem to mandate it.

10 See Hegel 1971b, I: 414, 420–424 / Hegel 1948, 297, 310–315.

11 See Hegel 1971b, III: 139–142 / Hegel 1977, 106–110.

of *Logic* which Hegel denominates ‘subjective logic’;¹² and plays a central role in his discussion of the ‘unconscious creativity of nature’ in the second volume of the *Encyclopaedia*, which is devoted to the philosophy of nature.¹³ Life is the dialectical structuration of organic development and liveliness is the sensuous appearance of being so structured.¹⁴ The key idea here is the interplay of parts and wholes in allowing a thing to persist over time and through internal alteration in response to the world at large. Organisms have dynamic, active forms of integrity, in which the part-whole relations are reciprocally supportive and allow for developing and ongoing interchange with other beings. As Hegel puts matters, such parts are not merely parts; they are *members* of a whole [*sie sind nicht mehr bloß zusammenhängende und zueinander sich verhaltende Teile, sondern Glieder ...*].¹⁵ The interplay in question involves attempts on the part of the entity to achieve stability relative to the demands both of and on the entity. This stability is always relative to such demands, which demands Hegel holds always slightly outpace any status quo, until the exhaustion of the entire series of possible alterations in response to demands. That is, Hegel envisages the integrity of any given bit of life to consist in encountering the world in part as *prima facie* recalcitrant to the demanding integrity of that bit of life at a given stage in its development. The entity in question overcomes the barriers by expanding its integrative understanding of itself and the world to encompass as, now, familiar what was initially unknown and un-mastered. ‘Understanding’ as it is used in this context need not denote an explicit cognitive process, i.e. as if such understanding requires reflective capacities. But in humans such integration does require those capacities, such that theoretical purchase on and predictive responses to the world would count as highly articulated forms of persistence, that is, of life and of

12 Hegel 1971b, VI: 469–487 / Hegel 2010, 676–688.

13 See Hegel 1971b, IX: 464 / Hegel 1971, II: 381 [§ 357 Zusatz].

14 Hegel writes that appearance [*Erscheinung*] is analytic to natural life and, metaphysically speaking, is a process in which a real thing externalises itself in a negativity, i.e. in something that is not initially recognised as its own externalisation and thus something that it is ‘not’. This is in fact a process of self-affirmation (‘*affirmative Beziehung auf sich selbst*’) (Hegel 1971b, XIII: 164 / Hegel 1975, 121). See also Hegel 1971b, VI: 76 / Hegel 2010, 382–383, where Hegel states that liveliness obtains when the ‘positive appears outside itself as the negative’.

15 Hegel 1971b, XIII: 160 / Hegel 1975, 118.

liveliness. Life integrates itself and develops through time by externalising its internal demands through action in the world and incorporating what were elements of the world foreign to life into life. Because liveliness is the appearance of such activity, liveliness likewise will be two-fold. One encounters liveliness as a manifestation of a process that has a developing internal component that is instantiated externally. This means that appearance is never mere appearance, but rather tokens its role in a greater developmental arc which arc must be, at least implicitly, seen through its lens. This is Hegel's variation of the concept of *Schein* so key to understanding the aesthetic thought of Goethe, Schiller, the romantics, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

'Liveliness' and 'beauty' are not synonyms, but they are closely related in meaning for Hegel. Recall that Hegel holds that only living things qualify as beautiful. Rocks, rivers, canyons, 'der bestirnte Himmel über mir' are not strictly speaking beauties.¹⁶ Put in terms of the idea of dialectical structuration just canvassed, one might say that beauty is the integrative and differentiating activity joined in life and liveliness at a particular point of balance of one to the other. Different balances may be struck, with the result that, while all life may be beautiful to a degree due to its liveliness, life can be more or less lively and thus more or less beautiful. At points of relatively high equipoise, beautiful things represent a total structure of ends-directed integrity in sensuous form. Accordingly, neoclassical conceptions of beauty, even in Kantian garb, are too static and formulaic for Hegel. Still, one might say without too much imprecision that Hegel modifies rather than rejects the neoclassical conception.

'INWARDNESS' AND 'THE HEARTFELT'

Application of the life-liveliness-beauty troika to art is straightforward. Hegel analyses intentional structures and, more than that, reflective intentional structures as highly developed forms of life with their own forms of liveliness. We mentioned in passing that natural beauties are only beautiful in Hegel's estimation if humans perceive them to be. What

16 They might be so derivatively by incorporation, for instance in the *karesansui* (Zen rock garden). The idea would be that the placement of the rocks, say, and the raking of the garden, would curate the inorganic matter, thereby making it art.

makes such perception *as of beauty* possible for Hegel is an isomorphism between one form of life and another: between the liveliness of the object and a conscious form of liveliness that is responsive to that liveliness. Human capacities are instantiations and expressions of life. Artefacts are products of intentions, specifically intentions to make them and through the making of them to convey meaning. Artefacts are external manifestations of meaning in objects that is both integral to and integrating of humans. If one makes such artefacts with the intent that they be beautiful and, thus, with the intent that they instantiate and express their liveliness in this heightened way, this too is a form of life and liveliness. Moreover, such objects are interactive focal points for audiences' intentional activity (interpretation, etc.) and, thus, qualify as integral to and integrative of the audience as a form of social being. Art's integrative function has a species aspect, if one likes speaking that way.

In order to consider Hegel's account of painting at what he takes to be its endpoint, one must further specify the idea of lively self-integration in the terms appropriate to the romantic stage of art's progression. The relevant specification must register that human intellectual demands have developed to outpace the capacity of the sensuous to render liveliness in adequate terms – i.e. in terms that humans will find satisfactory for progressively comprehensive self-understanding. This specification is what Hegel terms 'inwardness' [*Innerlichkeit*]. Inwardness is the registering in the external expression of a living thing that its liveliness has been externalised according to internal demands. Inwardness is the external appearance of the internal *as internal*. Hegel writes that inwardness need not be a product of reflective or even conscious liveliness and is not limited to human liveliness.¹⁷ Given the inherent intentionality of art, however, conscious and reflective forms of inwardness are of the essence. Saying that inwardness is conscious is not to say that its manifestation in art requires the artist to plan to make inwardness an artistic topic. Nevertheless, as is the case with any externalisation, there is surface reference to an internal counterpart. Moreover, when Hegel speaks of the inwardness of art he links that phenomenon closely with religion, a sphere in which what is internal is conceived as a soul and what is external as a body – inwardness consists in the bodily expression of being ensouled.¹⁸ Hegel holds that these more explicitly subjective forms of inwardness are necessary

¹⁷ See Hegel 1971b, XIII: 178 / Hegel 1975, 133. For discussion, see also Pippin's chapter in this volume.

¹⁸ Hegel 1971b, XII: 166 / Hegel 2011, I: 215.

components of western European social life beginning with the Roman Republic and persisting in ever more complicated forms to the present.¹⁹

Note that the idea of inwardness is neutral with respect to whether the external reference is adequate to its internal referent, i.e. as to whether one can cleanly read off of the external expression the internal expressed state. One possible reason for this lack of transparency from the outer to the inner is that the externalisation itself holds back the revelation of the internal to some degree. An art-historical example of transparent *Innerlichkeit* might be Winckelmann's contention concerning the Laocoon statue group. Recall that Winckelmann interprets the group as depicting in part Laocoon's noble forbearance, a characterful state that fully and clearly presents on the surface of the sculpture. For reclusive *Innerlichkeit*, i.e. inwardness that would require more discernment to plumb the internal content that it instantiates, Hegel at times deploys a slightly different term, one that resonates romanticism: *Innigkeit*.²⁰ His use of this term is not, in my view, systematic, and it would be mistaken to treat it as terminologically rigid. In particular the distinction between it and *Innerlichkeit* is not clean. *Innigkeit*, or 'the heartfelt',²¹ is an intensified subspecies of self-conscious inwardness in which the external expression of the internal is, from the perspective of the internal aspect, unable to convey adequately the rich and special nature of the internal. There is a particular form of *Lebendigkeit* associated with *Innigkeit* and, thus, a particular form of beauty. As it develops in romantic art *Innigkeit* conveys intimacy of such intensity that the outside world recedes in significance. At its limits, the heartfelt expresses insularity – a world that is only comprehensible from within.²² It is important to note, however, that the heartfelt does not reject outright its external expression. Rather, part of its form of expression is reticence about the very act of expression. Increasingly this external

¹⁹ Hegel 1971b, XII: 342 / Hegel 2011, I: 434.

²⁰ Hegel 1971b, XIV: 86, 140, 144, 154–156, 170 / Hegel 1975, 485, 527, 531, 539–540, 552–553; See also Hegel 1971b, XV: 61 / Hegel 1975, 832. Rutter 2010, 73–75 and Peters 2015, 112 both contain good treatments of the concept.

²¹ The German is quite difficult to capture in translation. I have opted for 'the heartfelt' primarily for negative reasons. Some other possible translations, for instance 'fervent' and 'ardor', are a bit too dramatic, others, like 'earnest', 'unfeigned' or 'profound' too moralistic.

²² In his lectures on history Hegel ascribes this quality to the German people as a whole. See Hegel 1971b, XII: 494–496 / Hegel 2011, I: 508. He extends it in the lectures on aesthetics to the life of the Low Countries.

expression of turning away from the idea of adequate expression typifies the advance of art in the romantic period.

Painting is an art that is at its core romantic; accordingly, painting becomes the painting of worldly withdrawal. This development is of a piece with a general trend in modern intellectual life, which Hegel takes to be represented in German romantic poetry (i.e. that of the 'Beautiful Soul'), Protestant Christianity and Fichte's idealism. Each one of them presents spiritual exercises of radically subjective self-purification. This is the realm of heightened reflection, reflexivity and self-criticism in which what is taken to be external to the rapidly expanding internalised self is seen as a screen upon which the requirements of intensified subjective self-understanding throw up a plurality of images in order to drive home the superiority of subjective requirements to any possible state of the external world.

SPACE, LIGHT AND COLOUR

Hegel famously holds that Attic sculpture is absolutely adequate to the level of self-understanding present at the time of its making, at which, he claims, there is a much less developed conception of individuality than is the case in modern Europe. When Hegel speaks about what makes sculpture adequate in this way, he emphasises four connected matters: (1) it is human in form, and not merely humanoid; (2) the rendering of human form is idealised and yet personal (has 'individuality', unlike, e.g. Archaic Greek korai statues), providing an immediate and ineluctable sense of the divine within the human; (3) it is fully three-dimensional in its representation; and (4) in it the hand of the artist is emergent (unlike the sculpture of the symbolic period), but the personality of the artist does not dominate the art. Hegel charts the supersession of sculpture by painting largely in terms of the provision of spatiality to the artist and art.²³ In sculpture three-dimensional space is a representational given;

23 Hegel's use of the term 'space' [*Raum*] in his discussion of classical art is anachronistic, a defect that is especially egregious given his insistence that dialectical critique must be immanent. Of course one might counter that the *Lectures* are not supposed to be dialectical demonstrations, so the requirement on immanent critique may be relaxed. In any case, there is no conception of space at all in antiquity, but rather a conception of place [τόπος / *locus*]. I pass over this infelicity in the text.

the artist need not represent the space as being otherwise than it is. For this reason, sculpture is less representational an art to the extent that the basis for representation is not itself the product of representation, or so Hegel argues. The painter, on the other hand, does have to construct the representational space itself. The point is by now anodyne; it was close to being so even in Hegel's time. In order to secure representationally vivid results, a painter must paint space itself *pictorially*, rendering three planes in two. Hegel connects this challenge intimately with inwardness and being heartfelt. Submitting the given external conditions for representation to the fictional demands of pictorial space is to make the world submit to stringent subjective, imaginative criteria. This project conditions all painting for Hegel: painting's internal and intrinsic end – that towards which its concept develops in full – is to so detach the visually represented world from given models of representing it that the work, though externalised in a painting, is as far as a visual article can go in pushing the representational limits of rendering the world in visual terms.

Hegel also charts the development of painting towards its endpoint in terms of its basis in light (*Licht*). This is a romantic preoccupation in part – Hölderlin deploys highly idiosyncratic understandings concerning the phenomenal nature of light as a form of inverse depth in his hymns (a treatment extraordinarily important for Heidegger from the 1930s on) – but it is also closely related to questions of the nature of colour, to which we shall turn momentarily. Considered in physical terms, light is the 'principle of individuation and specification of matter',²⁴ the 'pure existential power of spatial plenitude',²⁵ the 'space become physical'²⁶ and the incipience in nature of subjectivity.²⁷ Light plays an important role in the history of religion, providing the basis for classical Persian forms of worship (e.g. Zoroastrianism), in which light is revered as both the 'principle of activity and life' and the source of spiritual intuition.²⁸ This devotional aspect is connected with Hegel's view of the significance of light in nature: light is the most inchoate presence of the subjective in nature and thus of the divine. Because it is the precondition for being seen, Hegel writes that light is the physical basis for all painting, one that

²⁴ Hegel 1971b, IV: 38 [§§ 116–117].

²⁵ Hegel 1971b, IX: 112 / Hegel 1978, II: 87 [§ 275 Zusatz].

²⁶ Hegel 1971b, X: 104 / Hegel 2007, 774.

²⁷ Hegel 1971b, IX: 111–125 / Hegel 1978, II: 87–96 [§§ 275–278 & Zusätze]; see also Hegel 1971b, XV: 30–31 / Hegel 1975, 808.

²⁸ Hegel 1971b, XII: 215–216 / Hegel 2011, I: 310–312.

emerges from the material of painting;²⁹ accordingly, painting's rendering of light as a material basis will be a marker of its developing reflective relation to itself. The point is one we have already seen at work in space: architecture and sculpture deal with given light. The visibility of painting requires light, e.g. a lighted room in which the painting is hung, but light as a form of making visible in the world depicted by the painting must itself be painted – the artist must provide light.

Hegel also holds that the relation of light and dark [*Dunkel*], of the making visible to being invisible [*Unsichtbarkeit*], are reciprocally related.³⁰ It is possible philosophically to have an analysis of absolute light without taking into account dark; but, like all analyses for Hegel, it will be importantly incomplete. Light and dark are a dyadic single structure for Hegel and this means *a fortiori* that the same is true for the relation of the visible to the invisible. This idea, which had a profound formative effect on Merleau-Ponty, is in turn crucial to Hegel's treatment of colour. The main idea is that light as an individuating force requires antecedently invisible things (unlit things, which are to that extent dark). This means that degrees of interplay of light and dark are constitutive of visibility and of the visibility rendered in painting. Objects are more or less lit, and that is the same thing for Hegel as saying that they are more or less shadow. This, again, is a thought – i.e. that shadow is not indicative of a deficient state of visibility – that wields a great deal of power in phenomenological approaches to sight (Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre).

Colour finds its proximity to the question of the nature of light through the account of shadow. Recall that Hegel was an admirer of Goethe's *Towards a Theory of Colour* and is interested primarily in the phenomenology of colour, i.e. how it is that colour is experienced.³¹ Goethe

²⁹ Hegel 1971b, XV: 31 / Hegel 1975, 809.

³⁰ Hegel 1971b, XV: 31–33 / Hegel 1975, 809–810.

³¹ Hegel 1971b, XV: 32–34 / Hegel 1975, 810–11; cf. Hegel 1971b, IX: 241–269; II: 194–217 [§ 320 and Zusatz]; Hegel 1971b, X: 108 / Hegel 2007, 77 [§ 410 Zusatz]; see also Hegel 2004, 206–207. Wittgenstein's statement that 'what Goethe was really seeking [...] was not a physiological but a psychological theory of colours' (see Wittgenstein 1980, 18) seems right, with the proviso that Goethe is not really offering a theory (i.e. an explanatory account) of colour; rather he is offering experiments in colour perception that he hopes will be useful theoretically. Wittgenstein recognises this feature of Goethe's account elsewhere. See Wittgenstein 1978, 11. It is instructive to note that admiration for Goethe's work on colour is perhaps the only positive point of contact between Hegel and Schopenhauer, both of whom had conversations with Goethe on this

took exception to Newton's analysis of colour in his *Opticks*, which argues that colour only emerges from white light as a result of prismatic refraction. It might not entirely stretch plausibility to say that Goethe's contention is a kind of Copernican Turn in the theory of colour, i.e. that one must also take into account the distance of the reflective surface upon which refracted light is projected when one is determining questions of the nature of colour. Accordingly, Goethe does not view colour as insubstantial as he charges Newton does (i.e. all light is *really* white light). Individual colours have more autonomy, for all colours, white included, depend on background conditions such as spatial distance, composition of reflective surfaces, size of the reflective area, etc. White light, as Newton understands it, is a one-sided abstraction for Hegel. Light always manifests in gradations of darkness. Colours, in turn, are different instantiations of the synthetic presence of light and dark. But again, these are not antecedently independent things. As he says a bit more figuratively, light is in itself 'murky' [*getrübt*] because always 'darkened' [*verdunkelt*].³²

Hegel's main point is that what one might take to be mere effects of light – shadow, colouring – are central to the nature of light itself.³³ Thus, he writes that shadows are not so much cast by figures as they are proper parts of figured objects.³⁴ Painting that manipulates light, colour and shadow within pictorial space – that submits the very basis of vision and visibility to the hand of ingenuity – is art advancing itself in terms of explicit theoretical self-knowledge. Hegel borrows a term from the aesthetics of the Venetian Renaissance to speak of colour at the edge of this thematic potential: *Kolorit* (Italian: *colorito*). This is the forerunner of Dutch colour effects [*Färbung*] in Hegel's estimation. *Colorito* displaces *disegno* as the basis for craft and virtuosity, signalling the passage from late Renaissance to Reformation painting in Titian.³⁵

topic. For Schopenhauer's view, see Schopenhauer 1972, I: § 14. It may be that Schopenhauer is the source of Wittgenstein's interest in Goethe's account.

32 Cf. Goethe's views. For an incisive treatment of Goethe's account of colour in the context of the development of German idealism, see Förster 2011, 175–80.

33 Hegel XXIX.1: 479.

34 Hegel 1971b, XV: 33 / Hegel 1975, 810. The *locus classicus* for this point is Merleau-Ponty 1964; see also Podro 1998. The best treatment known to me of the decisive shift in Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the primacy of perception is Hughes 2013. For attention to the historical dimensions of the ontology of shadow, see Baxandall 1995.

35 Hegel 2004, 213, 215.

GOING DUTCH: PORTRAITS AND STILL LIVES

The painting of the High Italian Renaissance is for Hegel the time when painting is most adequate to the task of externalisation in visual terms of a pictorial space in which is depicted a subjectivity-laden version of the idealised classical human form. Hegel holds that Renaissance portraits depict their subjects with a balance struck between ideal external demeanour and individual personality. In essence, Renaissance portraiture plays the same role relative to painting that classical sculpture plays to art in general: it occupies a point of complete balance between conceptual content and form. The term he uses here, *Persönlichkeit*, denotes both 'personality' and 'personhood'; Hegel means both. Consider Raphael's *Portrait of Agnolo Doni* [Fig. 5.1]. The sitter is presented as fully ethically present in the portrait, his character almost entirely available from the image.

Dutch painting is by comparison to the Renaissance inferior *as art*.³⁶ Dutch painting is, therefore, not as beautiful as its Renaissance counterpart because the conceptual content of Dutch art is more advanced than is possible to show in painting. But Dutch painting is *philosophically* superior to all other modes. Take portraiture. Here, Hegel writes, there is an increase in painterly technique to its very limit. Hegel's point is not that Rembrandt is the superior to Raphael in terms of verisimilitude, whatever one thinks of that proposition. Rather, Hegel's point is closer to something Clement Greenberg might have said (about very different art): that Dutch portraiture is about the paint as a reality unto itself. True, paint and painting are still engaged in rendering subjects in representational terms, but now the terms in question are inward and heartfelt, conveying the character of the subject by portraying the implacable depth of character not adequate to outward expression. Take Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait with Beret and Turned-Up Collar* [Fig. 5.2]. The self-portrait is famous, even from among the over fifty self-portraits Rembrandt painted, in showing

36 Hegel's only trip to the Netherlands, undertaken in 1822, included visits to an unnamed gallery (probably the Maritshuis) in The Hague, as well as to artistic venues in Brussels, Amsterdam and to various unidentified churches. Hegel mentions seeing several large canvasses by Rembrandt and Rubens and works by van Eyck. He does not identify the works. For a description of Hegel's trip, see Althaus 1992, 402-407.



5.1 Raphael, *Portrait of Agnolo Doni*, c. 1506 (63 × 45 cm). Oil on wood.
Florence: Palazzo Pitti (Galleria Palatina). © Alinari / Art Resource, New York.

spiritual and financial tribulation. But the effect of the painting is not worn entirely on its face. It is a painting of *depth*, part of its tremendous emotional effect coming from the palpable sense that in painting himself Rembrandt summoned up something reluctant within himself to portray his isolation. This summoning-up is realised formally with Rembrandt's sculptural, non-mimetic use of paint.

I wish to suggest, however, that it is in connection to other genre painting that Hegel's views on advanced painting come into sharpest focus. Depictions of the everyday receive praise for their portrayal of homespun rollicking celebration that is not in the final analysis licentious. Works such as Steen's *The Merry Family* [Fig. 5.3] are suffused with the spirit of the particularity [*Besonderheit*] of *that* community's festivals, after which the hung-over celebrants shall wend their way to church.³⁷

Hegel repeatedly emphasises the historical importance of the hard-headed and hard-won independence of the Lowlands from Spain, a political correlate to the subjectivity-enhancing passage from the externality of Catholic worship to the internality of Protestant prayer. That burghers, and not merely nobility, could value, purchase and display paintings (and above all else, paintings) is for him likewise remarkable and progressive. Moreover, still-life painting in Holland developed in the first market for art that was recognisably not structured around strict patronage. That is, most paintings were not commissioned; they were made and sold to 'anonymous' buyers who prized the paintings because of their virtuosity in general, not because they were made to order. This caused painters to push the limits on technique within genres, at times with extremely nuanced and specific excellence.³⁸ Attention to such social and political dimensions is something one might reasonably expect from Hegel, of course, but they go hand in glove with more recognisably aesthetic evaluation. These are depictions of a way of life that asserts the power of depiction *itself* to form that life by the utmost manipulation of painting's inherent means. One might say that for him Dutch art casts a free eye back over the entire history of painting in order to redact as much as possible the dependency of

37 They are, that is, visual counterparts to what Hegel says about end-state poetry in the section of the *Lectures* in which he treats what he calls 'objective humor'.

38 For instance, Gerard Ter Borch (1617–1681), known for his luxurious depictions of silk (cf. Grootenboer's chapter in this volume, pp. 198–199). I owe the example to Hanneke Grootenboer, whose discussion of the complex interactions of the art market and genre in this period has been indispensable to me.



5.2 Rembrandt van Rijn, *Self-Portrait with Beret and Turned-Up Collar*, 1659 (84.5 × 66 cm). Oil on canvas. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, inv. 1937.1.72. © Alinari / Art Resource, New York.



5.3 Jan Steen, *The Merry Family*, 1668 (110.5 × 141 cm). Oil on canvas. Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, inv. SK-C-229. © HIP / Art Resource, New York.

the material component of painting on reality: past the depiction of three dimensions in two and on to the depiction of the world in terms of *mood*.

We saw that light, colour and shadowing are necessary for the very possibility of representation for Hegel and, therefore, are foundational to represent as such if what one is interested in representing is the foundation of one's representational enterprise. And that is *in nuce* the brief for Dutch painting for Hegel as one best reconstructs his views on the end of painting: it is the painting of the foundations of painting, which foundations can almost not be painted at all because they are foundations. Such painting does not require that there be anything special about what is painted – the subject of the painting need not be exalted. In fact, the sheer virtuosity of the painting in handling its physical and metaphysical bases is best on display when an ordinary subject matter is, through the mere painting of it, elevated to a spectacular visual experience. At its limit, this is the painting of the banal as far from banal. Dutch painting is technically superior to that of the Renaissance, then, not in terms of its subject matter or in terms of the adequacy of its technique to its

subject matter. It is superior to all other forms of painting in terms of its reflexivity. It is, simply put, painting about painting.

Hegel might have said that Dutch still life stands at the *very* end of painting for just these reasons and more.³⁹ Still lifes are representations of natural objects, almost but not quite a return to natural beauty through art. Nature, however, is almost always intermingled with artefact in still life. At a minimum, there is one artefact in play even in paintings that are otherwise exclusively of natural objects, i.e. the table, the basis for the display nature. The idea of display is crucial.⁴⁰ The objects of still lifes (at least those painted ‘from life’), even those that are non-artefacts, are arranged to be painted and arranged in the painting of them. Still lifes always present nature in and out of natural context.⁴¹ Still lifes present nature as denatured by dint of human use. The natural articles are used, in the first instance, as the subject matter of the painting and, in the second, what is painted is also their use – their availability for human *consumption*. These are not related through mere coincidence; the meaning of the still life is consumption in two interlocking dimensions: consumption is what is depicted and the painting presents itself, in virtue of that subject matter, as itself an article of consumption.

39 Cf. Svetlana Alpers’ application of the concept of describing to Dutch painting of this period: Alpers 1983. Her approach is compatible with Hegel’s, as she allows in passing (*ibid.*, 73 and n. 1). Both Alpers and Hegel hold that ‘description’ does not rule out iconography – butterflies resurrected, diligent bees, etc. Their point is that even the icons are submitted to overall descriptive frameworks.

40 Cf. Grootenboer 2003. Grootenboer convincingly argues that display is not the basic mode of the sub-genres of Dutch still life she considers; rather, the anamorphosis characteristic of such still lifes presents (*not* represents) depicted objects in their proximity, *ibid.*, 21–60. This is connected to the phenomenon of displacement of the viewer, and thus of the visibility confronting the viewer – there is no one position relative to the depiction that the still life prescribes to the viewer for ‘maximal effect’. Instead, the viewer is implied as being both everywhere and nowhere at once: everywhere because the flatness and crowding of depicted elements imply that they might be seen from anywhere within the depicted space with equal visual ‘returns’; nowhere because no matter what possible vantage point one takes the ‘depth’ of the scene remains and thus the palpable sense of things not being visible. Grootenboer quite sensibly connects this way of seeing what is at stake in Dutch still lifes to Merleau-Ponty, whom I have also mentioned in passing. I do not believe that Hegel could so evacuate the idea of representation from his account of art that he would embrace this view of ontological plenitude.

41 See Woodall 2012 for a brilliant analysis of the social meanings in Dutch culture for such arrangement.

The burgher purchases the still life for his home as a *memento lucri vel mori*, which stands amidst the owner's riches, attesting to his good taste, his knowledge of the mortal limitation of the worldly, or both.⁴² The painting is thus both a representation of riches, the expression of richness and an exemplification of riches (due to its own 'market value'). Still lifes then are depictions of nature drawn away from itself for purposes of exacting regard. In this way, still lifes are autopsies of nature – of 'dead nature' [*nature morte*] as the French for 'still life' has it – that is, a way to present liveliness of nature under condition of total submission to the liveliness of artist and paint.

Norman Bryson writes that 'still life is [...] the great anti-Albertian genre'. Instead of a *fenestra aperta* on the world, the typical lack of point perspective in Dutch still life flattens the depiction and brings the depicted objects closer to sight, allowing the eye to course over them in a less restricted fashion.⁴³ This felt proximity to the pictorial plane is conjoint with the display of objects within the still life, things whose use is all but exemplified in their display. This is especially true of the sub-genre of the 'breakfast still life' [*banketjestukken*]. Examples such as Pieter Claez's *Still Life with Oysters* [Fig. 5.4] and Jan van de Velde's *A Goblet of Wine, Oysters and Lemons* [Fig. 5.5] portray the intimacy of the incipient meal and the rendering of vegetables, meats, cutlery and tableware so meticulously that close inspection attendant upon consumption is an open invitation.

Now, one might be tempted to downplay the case of the breakfast still lifes on account of the treatment of light and colour. One might argue, that is, that the typically muted diffusion of light over the canvas and the limited difference in hues do not exactly scream virtuosity.⁴⁴ But that, I would argue, is precisely the point. Light and colour are so controlled that their mastery need not be trumpeted. Specifically, the mastery of light and colour consists in the way continuous gradients in the light-colour tandem affect the proximity of the picture plane to the viewer; the less a light source is indicated and the more the objects are imbued with light as if from within, there will be absent characteristic marks of perspectival

42 To make things more complex, there is a sub-genre of Dutch still life that includes elements of the *vanitas*, indeed often the primary element, i.e. the human skull.

43 See Bryson 1990, 71. Yet, one might also say, closer to home, that it also eschews Rembrandt in that what was to him expressive was the non-mimetic brushstroke. One might say that Dutch still life occupies a median point between such extremes: its brushstroke is expressively mimetic.

44 See Hegel 2004, 214.

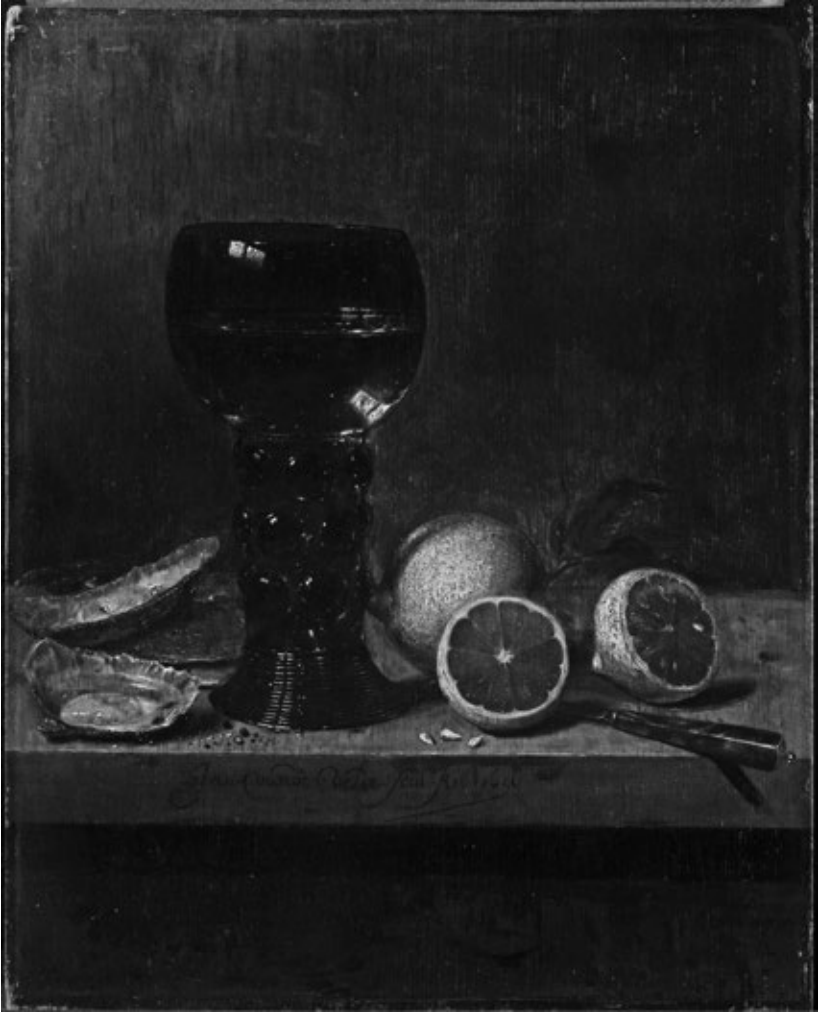


5.4 Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Oysters*, c. 1633 (37.8 × 53.2 cm).
 Oil on wood. Kassel: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, inv. GK 437.
 © bpk Bildagentur / Kunstsammlungen, Kassel / Art Resource, New York.
 Reproduced in colour as Plate 2a.

viewing that distance the pictorial plane from the viewer.⁴⁵ That there are only very discrete light sources and very subtle variations in colouring in the breakfast still lifes would be exactly what one would expect, given the requirements of Hegel's colour theory, according to which light and colour are the same phenomenon viewed at two different levels of specification. Muted light is muted colour. Hegel writes that in Dutch painting this final and determining aspect of painting as a whole is the enlivening effect of beautiful colour for colour's sake, made all the more present by the everyday objects depicted.⁴⁶ But the manipulation of colour and light can be more overt in Dutch still life. This is shown when one turns from the simple and devotional breakfast scenes (what is 'breaking fast', if not simple and devotional?) to the extravagance of the so-called 'ostentatious still lifes' [*pronkstillevens*], many of which are banquet scenes – depictions

45 Cf. Hegel 1968, XXIX.1: 480–481.

46 Hegel 1968, XXIX.1: 178.



5.5 Jan van de Velde, *A Goblet of Wine, Oysters and Lemons*, 1662
(40.3 × 32.2 cm). Oil on wood. London: National Gallery, inv. NG1255.
© National Gallery, London / Art Resource, New York.

of the feast at the ready for which overabundance is key. At the limit of ostentation such art may hinder ready domestic response and induce the idea that what is before one is a collection of difficult to obtain, luxurious items. Still another category of Dutch still life, still lifes of flowers, can revel in just this abundance – not merely the abundance of nature as such, but of the ability of the Dutch East India Company to make available a superabundance to those with means. Of particular importance are exotic flora of the Dutch colonies provisioned to local greenhouses, as in Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder's, *Still Life of Flowers in a Wan-Li Vase on a Ledge with Flowers, Shells and a Butterfly* [Fig. 5.6].

Flowers are often thought beautiful on their own and so can obscure a main point here. Let us return to the table. The objects depicted in such still lifes, both in virtue of being still in the way they are (killed, taken from nature for human use) and due in certain cases to their triviality when compared with human subject matter, can be beautiful only when beautifully rendered.⁴⁷ A hare may or may not be beautiful when seen in mid-spring in the meadow, but it is not so dead and laid out on a table for dressing (as in Jan Weenix's *Still Life of a Dead Hare, Partridges and Other Birds in a Niche* [Fig. 5.7]). In Hegel's way of putting matters, still life has to turn the form of a Kantian aesthetic motto to other purposes, *Lebendigkeit ohne Leben*. Again, the key point is that beauty depends here on making, over and against the banal and dead.

Back to flowers: say the flowers depicted are themselves beautiful, i.e. are not merely depicted as being so. What Dutch art – and Dutch still life in particular – does is compete with nature to make what is shown even more beautiful. As we mentioned, this is not the art of verisimilitude; the art itself must do better than nature relative to even natural beauty, not just measure up to it. This may seem a trivial point, but for Hegel it would be far from trivial. For what might from the standpoint of nature be deemed 'excess beauty' or even beautification, is the essence of beauty – i.e. the submission of nature at its aesthetic best to virtuosity. The same may be said for artefacts in still lifes. In table pictures and *pronkstillevens* there is present all manner of things that are products of high-order craft. The Netherlands at this period had estimable local craftsmanship in smithing, glassmaking and weaving. Moreover, what could not be made in the homeland the navy could procure (at substantial cost) from

⁴⁷ It would be instructive to compare what Hegel might have said more about still lifes with what Schelling does say about them, but I cannot pursue that here. See Schelling 1959, 193–194.



5.6 Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, *Still Life of Flowers in a Wan-Li Vase on a Ledge with Flowers, Shells and a Butterfly*, 1609–1610 (68.6 × 50.7 cm).

Oil on copper. London: National Gallery, inv. NG6613. © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, New York. Reproduced in colour as Plate 3.



5.7 Jan Weenix, *Still Life of a Dead Hare, Partridges and Other Birds in a Niche*, c. 1675 (120 × 98.5 cm). Oil on canvas. Kiev: Museum of Western and Oriental Art. Wikimedia Commons.

far-flung colonial lands.⁴⁸ Willem Claez Heda and Willem Kalf (*Still Life with the Drinking-Horn of the Saint Sebastian Archers' Guild, Lobster and Glasses* [Fig. 5.8]) specialised in still lifes that are out to trump such finery by painting it better than it was made. As Bryson remarks, such painting expresses 'Faustian ambition'.⁴⁹

Dutch painting, placed under a Hegelian lens, is the most technically accomplished painting possible, a form of painting that pushes representation to the edge of what it is capable. This does not mean that Hegel judges the concept of representation to be elective for painting; he does not. Nor do I think – although this is a contested point – that he could countenance non-representational painting whose constant point of contact was its reactive stance towards representation and, more precisely, representation

⁴⁸ See Schama 1987, 160–163.

⁴⁹ Bryson 1990, 105. Alpers 1995, 191–222 also drives this point home.

as a limit on painting. This is connected to a second point, i.e. that Dutch painting for him is essentially the depiction of the inconsequential. And both these points are connected to a third, i.e. that in Dutch art honest labour finds an ethical correlate in material consumption.

That the unexceptional, speaking properly, can be painted *at all* – i.e. that it can be *art* – is what is ultimately most arresting for Hegel. But there is a cost, for at this endpoint painting has ebbed in its overall meaning. It gives way to sensuous modalities that are less representational, perhaps even non-representational; and this tokens a diminution in cultural power.⁵⁰ We began by reflecting on natural beauty and, in



5.8 Willem Kalf, *Still Life with the Drinking-Horn of the Saint Sebastian Archers' Guild, Lobster and Glasses*, c. 1653 (6.4 × 102.2 cm). Oil on canvas. London: National Gallery, inv. BG6444. © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, New York. Reproduced in colour as Plate 2b.

50 Technically speaking, music must involve *Vorstellung* for Hegel since it is a romantic art form and thus is 'religious' in its basic form. For Hegel representations

important part, have been considering the residue of Hegel's treatment of natural beauty in his account of painting, ending up with paintings of nature explicitly denatured and, therefore, dead.⁵¹ There are other points that one might make. For instance, we have not lingered on the fact that the consumption, apart from its economic import, is implicitly tactile, gustatory and olfactory. The depicted and therefore manipulated sense of visual proximity, the form of closeness that is involved, pleads for an imaginative indulgence of these other senses. Hegel has some interesting things to say about touch, smell and taste, but the point again is that these less 'abstract' sense modalities are anchored in the past of the plastic arts: in architecture and sculpture, and their role in that regard is rehearsed again against the background of advancing subjective demand and the magisterial reformation of painting at its technical summit.⁵²

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in this sense are typically pictures and not notational. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Hegel's account of music focuses heavily on music with text, rendering it more pre-poetic than in its own terms.

51 Hegel 2004, 214 [*Gestorbensein*].

52 Many thanks to Josh Billings, T.J. Clark, Sebastian Gardner, Lydia Goehr, Simon Goldhill, Julia Peters, Robert Pippin, Joanna Woodall and especially Hanneke Grootenboer for very stimulating comments on a prior version of this paper. I also thank the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts at the University of Notre Dame for a travel grant used to attend the conference at King's College London at which this paper was presented, as well as for subvention support in obtaining the images that appear in the essay.

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HANNEKE GROOTENBOER

THE SELF-CONSCIOUS IMAGE

Painting and Hegel's idea of reflection

INTRODUCTION: A RETURN FROM OTHERNESS

In 1975, Richard Estes painted *Central Savings* [Fig. 6.1]. We see the front of a spick-and-span diner on a typical Manhattan street corner. The degree of brightness suggests mid-morning – and the clock in the centre tells us that it is a quarter past ten – yet the diner is completely empty. At first sight, this seemingly banal picture demands very little from us as viewers. There are no symbols to decipher, no clues given as to what exactly is being depicted here. Why have we paused here, in the middle of the sidewalk, whereas other passers-by move on (we see their shadowy silhouettes briskly walking out of the frame)? What *they* remain unaware of *we* can see: overlaid upon the shiny red counter and its empty stools is the dazzling spectacle of a reflected cityscape extending behind us. What should, strictly speaking, have remained outside of our view is now contained within the diner. The dizzying doubling of reflections simultaneously bouncing off multiple shiny surfaces makes it difficult to determine what is inside and what is outside. Where, for instance, does the orange and red 'banner' actually belong? And what about the silver strips running along the ceiling to the right? Something has entered this space that refuses to position itself, that refuses to take sides (in or out?) but seems suspended in the middle, stretched out, as it were, over both areas. For a moment we forget that while looking through the large glass window, we are also looking *at* it. The bright red letters spelling 'burger' in reverse, projected at the window, are also projected *into* the space from outside. When we bend in to study them closely we note that they must be part of the diner's front that falls outside this painting's cropping. The backwards word has been projected into the space via its being doubly



6.1 Richard Estes, *Central Savings*, 1975 (91.4 × 121.9 cm). Oil on canvas. Kansas City: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Gift of the Friends of Art, inv. F75-13. Photograph by Jamison Miller. Reproduced in colour as Plate 5a.

mirrored in the bank's windows opposite the diner, such that this reflection brings it 'back' to the diner, and into this picture. Indeed, the term 'reflection' comes from the Latin *reflectere*, which literally means 'to bend' and 'to bring back'. The reflections, brightly articulated and translucent, are nonetheless somewhat impenetrable despite the transparency of the window. The result is a jumble of mirror images bouncing off one another. Are we being invited to reflect on reflection?¹

In his writings on aesthetics, Hegel insists that the function of painting is not to imitate everyday life but to reflect Spirit through external forms so as to evoke reflection. Not an actual landscape, but one that has been rendered into a two-dimensional picture enables us to reflect on it, Hegel insists. Colours and shapes that make up a painting are never

¹ Only after I completed this chapter did I discover Aron Vinegar's exciting essay (in Vinegar and Boetzkes 2014, 249–268), discussing 'Reluzenz: On Richard Estes', in which he links Estes' work, in particular his reflections, to Heideggerian thought.

meant to replace actual objects, but their transformation into images relieves them of their materiality: they become mere appearances that invite our contemplation. To denote such two-dimensional appearances, Hegel uses the term ‘*scheinen*’, which in German means both to appear and to shine and which Knox translates as ‘pure appearance’. In *Schein* (shine), Hegel explains, the inwardness of consciousness (or Spirit) can fully express itself ‘in the reflection [*Widerschein*] of externality’ (Hegel 1975, 801–802).² In his *Lectures on Fine Art*, Hegel is preoccupied with painting’s capacity to ‘shine’. He implies that painting, more than any other medium, can show this inwardness through its *appearance* rather than its being. His most prominent example in this regard is seventeenth-century Dutch painting, in particular its representations of objects of daily life that, while uninteresting in themselves, let their subject matter be ‘outshone’ by shine as such.

I would like to suggest that the excessive use of reflection in Estes’ *Central Savings* is an indication that this painting may ‘appear’ in a Hegelian way, wittingly or unwittingly, as a reflection of a deeper consciousness. I am interested in the extent to which we see the reflection of consciousness at play in Estes’ painting, which, very much like Dutch painting, deals with the banality of daily life. In *Central Savings* this quotidian surface has superimposed upon it an excess of multiple reflections, fixed by Estes in the form of a deep glow. However, Estes’ painting is fundamentally different from the works of seventeenth-century Dutch painting in one major aspect: it aspires to appear to be something else. Standing in front of *Central Savings*, we see a photograph even as we know we are looking at a painting. Our disorientation reveals how Estes’ picture has effortlessly overruled our authority as subject by managing to deceive our senses. What exactly does this image think it *is*?

Playing with the limitations of its medium, Estes’ painting fits perfectly into a long art historical tradition, represented most famously by images such as Diego Rodriguez Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* [Fig. 6.2] and Jan van Eyck’s *Arnolfini Portrait* [Fig. 6.3] – self-reflexive images that often pose conundrums for their viewer through ambiguous reflections. In both the Velázquez and the van Eyck works, a mirror hanging on the back wall reflects figures occupying the space stretching out in front of

² For an extensive discussion of ‘shine’ and art, see John Sallis’ discussion of ‘Carnation and the eccentricity of painting’, in Houlgate 2007, 90–118. See also Vanhaelen 2012 for an excellent analysis of ‘shine’ in the works of Hegel and Barthes, discussed in relation to Dutch seventeenth-century painting.

the painting, where *we* are expected to stand. These artworks present an unsolvable paradox to us as viewers, as we will forever be puzzled by the fact that these paintings, by not reflecting our image in the mirror, deny our viewpoint by the very configuration that enables us to see them *from* that position. Following Victor Stoichita, we could call these paintings 'self-aware' images, and though they may be playful tricks, offering witty commentary on the nature of their own representation, they nonetheless seriously explore the possibilities and limitations of visual representation. I would like to use Hegel's notion of self-consciousness to argue that in the context of the rich history of self-reflexive imagery, Estes' work pushes this kind of self-awareness to extremes. *Central Savings* goes way beyond its ostensible limitations when it radically presents itself as something it is not, namely a photograph, making obvious reference to the 'killing' of painting by the invention of photography (as Paul Delaroche was famously said to have observed when seeing a daguerreotype for the first time). Photography is painting's negation, its other. Therefore, in this essay, I would suggest that rather than being self-aware or self-reflexive, Estes' painting is self-conscious through its portrayal of itself as its negative. I would like to argue that it attempts to 'think' itself as being not-painting, or rather, it ponders about how painting would appear as if it were photography.

If we consider the grand narrative of realistic representation, we see that photography, entering history around 1837, was considered from the get-go as painting's replacement, because it would patently put an end to the justification, aim and function painting had been understood to possess for centuries. Photography cast painting into a crisis from which it only slowly recovered through a long period of self-analysis called modernism. For this essay, I am less interested in what painting may have lost in its transformation in the wake of photography (such as the aura of authenticity, as Benjamin would have it) than in what it has gained in terms of consciousness. In particular, I am interested in understanding how Estes' *Central Savings* can assist us to better grasp Hegel's definition of thinking as a movement of a return to the self from otherness, which is, I suggest, a 'merging' of thinking self and self-as-object that we also see in Estes' blending of painting and photography, a visual articulation of this movement as a return of painting from photography.



6.2 Diego Rodríguez Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, c. 1656 (318 × 276 cm).
Oil on canvas. Madrid: Museo del Prado, inv. P01174. © Museo Nacional
del Prado / Art Resource, New York.



6.3 Jan van Eyck, *Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his Wife*, 1434 (82.2 × 60 cm). Oil on wood. London: National Gallery, inv. NG186. © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, New York.

NOT YET THOUGHT

When Hegel travelled to the Netherlands in 1822, he found it a wonderful country.³ The cities of Holland were among the finest he had seen, he wrote enthusiastically to his wife: exquisite, well cared for and above all clean, as no rotten doors or broken windows could be found. 'In the Hague and generally here, all the streets are filled with the finest shops, in the evening all the streets are lit up by their illuminations; endless assortments – gold, silver, porcelain, tobacco, bread, shoes – everything perfectly arranged in booths'.⁴ Hegel found in the streets of The Hague some of the neatly arranged, glimmering objects that he had observed in Dutch seventeenth-century paintings. What such paintings of tidy domestic interiors, busy scenes of street life and cheerful merry companies demonstrate for Hegel is not the subject matter of everyday life, but the way they appear: they *shine*. In particular in the chapter on romantic painting in his *Lectures on Fine Art*, he is fascinated by the lustre of metal, the shimmer of a bunch of grapes by candlelight, or a vanishing glimpse of sunlight through a window. 'With what skill have the Dutch painted the lustre of satin gowns with all the manifold reflections and degrees of shadow in the folds, etc., and the sheen of silver, gold, copper, glass vessels, velvet, etc.,', he writes with rising amazement. His close observations partly lead him to determine that painting's function is not to mirror the world but to 'grasp this most transitory and fugitive material, and to give it permanence for our contemplation in the fullness of its life' (Hegel 1975, 599). The Dutch had fixed the most transitory nature of reflections not as a means of recording or describing the world (as Svetlana Alpers would have it) but as images offered for our contemplation. Hegel sees the manifold reflections in Dutch paintings as a kind of 'echo' of some kind of inner essence that *shines through*. It is through the shine of things that they make their 'pure appearance', uncoupled from their materiality.

If we look, for instance, at a painting by Willem Kalf, we see how the artist has pushed 'shine' to extremes. *Still Life with Oriental Rug* [Fig. 6.4] is a decadently messy arrangement of luxury items from the four corners of the world. We see an obviously expensive, heavy golden

³ On Hegel's trip to the Netherlands, see also Rush's chapter in this volume.

⁴ Hegel 1953, II: 362 (1813–1822); for an English translation, cf. Wiedmann 1968, 8. Quoted from Michelson 1982.

goblet surrounded by a delicate Wan-li porcelain bowl from China filled with exotic fruit from North Africa, a watch, a rug from the Middle East, and a heavy silver dish. A tall Venetian and a Roemer glass, both half-filled with wine, are placed behind this heap of costly objects. Compositions like this one are widespread among seventeenth-century still lifes; however, the deep black background that yawns behind his objects is characteristic of Kalf. Rather than giving us the empty wall that we usually see in such scenes, he chose this seemingly infinite darkness to maximise the effects of reflection. The objects in his paintings sparkle and glimmer like jewellery in a box, providing an absolute feast for the eyes, celebrating the virtuosity that lies in the creation of the image of the objects rather than the objects as such. Indeed, Goethe, writing about one of Kalf's paintings, famously remarked that if he had to choose between the (highly valuable) objects or the painting, he would definitely select the painting.⁵ But Kalf goes even further. Looking closely at the barely visible, tall Venetian glass, we see that it lacks an outline. Kalf, refraining from drawing the glass's contours, decided instead to suggest its outline by painting only the reflection of light on its rims. Assuming that the whole glass is *there*, right in front of us, at first we fail to notice that we are actually seeing the spectre of the glass emerging from darkness by its sparkle alone. Sacrificing materiality for pure appearance in paint, Kalf has successfully transformed glass into *Schein*, in the double sense of seeming and shining.

Hegel must have had a similar work (and perhaps Goethe's declaration) in mind when he observed that realistic representation is capable of pressing on 'to the extreme of pure appearance, i.e. to the point where the content does not matter and where the chief interest is in the artistic creation of that appearance' (1975, 812). Painting can thus fix the light that is bouncing off already fleeting surfaces – 'the appearances and reflections of clouds, waves, lochs, streams; the shimmering and glittering of wine in a glass' – and thereby capture a particular liveliness. 'Here painting leaves the ideal for the reality of life', he insists (1975, 812). In the glittering in Kalf's glass, we see painting as lifting itself out of its materiality, of the glass as much as of its paint, out of any essence *only* to reflect that essence.

Through this pure appearance of a painted object (rather than an object as such), Hegel sees something greater 'shining through', so to

⁵ Quoted in Bryson 1990, 124–125.



6.4 Willem Kalf, *Still Life with Oriental Rug*, c. 1660–1665 (65 × 54 cm). Oil on canvas. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, bequeathed by Daisy Linda Ward, inv. A563 © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

speak, in this case the inner spirit of the Dutch Republic, which was the freedom it had achieved on its own terms. For the Protestant philosopher, Dutch painting was the example par excellence of a perfect match between the subjectivity of the increasing self-consciousness of the Dutch burgher ruling his own country and the spirit of freedom permeating the young Republic, which had successfully thrown off the despotism of both the Spanish crown and the Catholic Church. The function of painting, or rather of shine, is to evoke contemplation in the viewer so that Spirit can realise itself *through* him/her by way of the viewer's awareness of it. Painting, he writes, 'opens the way for the first time to the principle of finite and inherently infinite subjectivity, the principle of our own life and existence, and *in painting we see what is effective and active in ourselves*' (Hegel 1975, 797, my italics). Hegel's most daring passages in his *Lectures* occur where he argues for painting's major role as a site for contemplation, or rather as a ground that 'pictures' the subject's consciousness. The glittering of wine in the tall Venetian glass in Kalf's painting 'sees' the consciousness of a contemplating viewer as much as the viewer sees the typically Dutch form of individualised Republican freedom reflected in it. It is crucial for us to realise that this reflection of the subject does not occur 'in' painting or result from it, but rather it happens on the level of shine, the bouncing of light off concrete glass. In that sense, shine is always on the move, somewhere in the middle between glass and its surrounding darkness, or between resonating the Spirit and reflecting the activities of the mind.

Hegel must have had this ricochet structure of physical reflection in mind when he wrote, in the introduction to *Lectures on Fine Art*, that art stands in the middle between immediate sensuousness and ideal thought. He refers to a work by Gerard Ter Borch (1617–1681) to demonstrate how Spirit gets sensualised in art, not so much via coloured shapes but through the play of different patches of colours, resulting in the effect of an overlay of shine over the entire image. Based in the city of Deventer towards the east of the Netherlands, Ter Borch became known for his exquisite small genre pictures featuring elegantly dressed ladies engaged in conversation or reading letters. He prominently placed these female figures in the foreground of his compositions so that the satin of their gowns virtually coincides with the surface of the painting. Typical for Ter Borch is the careful attention he pays to texture, which makes the satin of the dresses the very subject matter of his painting. Studying the satin closely, Hegel noticed how each spot of colour is a different shade of grey, blue, white, or yellow; but seen from a distance, the effect produced is that of a soft sheen proper to actual satin. Unlike the highlights that we see, for instance,

in Vermeer's interiors, which maintain their materiality as little blobs of white paint shaped by the point of a brush, the sheen in Ter Borch's painting results from the interplay of colours. Like music, Hegel writes, it produces this painterly effect from such an interconnection of hues: 'it is the juxtaposition *alone*', he insists, 'which makes this glistening and gleaming' (Hegel 1975, 600). As an effect rather than a quality of painting, sheen is completely dematerialised in Hegel's account. What emerges is an interweaving of various colours whose shine somehow starts looming over the painting's surface. This then begins to serve as a metaphor for his definition of thinking as such. I suggest that standing in front of one of Ter Borch's genre scenes, the philosopher recognised a similarity between philosophical and pictorial reflection. Just like the shine of Ter Borch's satin supersedes the painted surface, floating halfway between materiality and Spirit, so too does an art work occupy a middle position between sensible and ideal thought. An art work, he writes, is '*not yet* pure thought, but, despite its sensuousness, is *no longer* a purely material existent either' (Hegel 1975, 38). In the work of Ter Borch and Kalf we do not see consciousness 'behind' the depicted objects as if it were hidden meaning. Rather, consciousness 'shines through', taking off from the very surface of the painting that it produced. This 'taking off' is what Hegel defines as liveliness: the animated play of colour that is like 'objective music, a peal in colour' where the Spirit manifests itself in thinking: 'the spirit reproduces itself in thinking, in comprehending the world', Hegel states. (Hegel 1975, 599–600). We could say that in the work of Kalf and Ter Borch, we see painting on its way *to become* thought. And this shiny route towards thought was to be continued, despite Hegel's proclaimed end of painting, and whether or not Hegel would have liked it, in photorealism.

SELF-CONSCIOUS PAINTING

Reflection and shine are the hallmarks of Estes' *œuvre* [cf. e.g. Figs 6.5–6.7], from his early-seventies shop fronts, or the wide-angled urban vistas with deep perspectives plunging down the streets, to his more recent icebergs and lake pictures. After having completed *Bus with Reflection of the Flatiron Building* in 1970, a work that would become known as his first photorealist painting, the young artist stated that 'a thought ... about reflection is that you're looking at what isn't there – the tactile and the visual reality do not coincide – they overlap. Since all objects reflect – glass and chrome only more so – perhaps you show the ways



6.5 Richard Estes, *Telephone Booths*, 1967 (122 × 175.3 cm).
Acrylic on masonite. Madrid: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, inv. 1977.93.
© Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza / Scala / Art Resource, New York.

things look the less you show how they are or how we think they are'.⁶ In fact, Estes had discovered much more than the difference between objects and their appearance, or the blending of the visual and the tactile. *Central Savings*, and other paintings like it, demonstrate what usually only a photo camera can capture and our eye never pauses to take in: the constant flux and flickering of sunlight on (semi-)reflective surfaces that happens all around us while our bodies and eyes make their daily way through the world.

In 1972 Estes exhibited alongside Gerhard Richter and Jasper Johns in the 'Realism' section of Harald Szeemann's celebrated Documenta V. Whereas Richter from that moment onwards was embraced as a darling of art criticism, Estes' critical acclaim was short lived. Though he never declared himself to be part of a movement, Estes' cityscapes were seen as belonging to hyperrealism or superrealism, a current that also included Chuck Close's photo-based portraits, Robert Bechtle's family snapshot

⁶ I take the quotation from the artist's statement in the catalogue accompanying a 1968 exhibition in New York (Allan Stone Gallery): *Richard Estes - Recent Paintings*.



6.6 Richard Estes, *Double Self-Portrait*, 1976 (60.8 × 91.5 cm). Oil on canvas. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, Mr. and Mrs. Stuart M. Speiser Fund, inv. 594.1976. © The Museum of Modern Art; licensed by Scala / Art Resource, New York.



6.7 Richard Estes, *Nedick's*, 1970 (121.9 × 167.6 cm). Oil on canvas. Madrid: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, inv. 1993.10. © Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza / Scala / Art Resource, New York.

paintings, Robert Cottingham's movie theatre fronts and Ralph Goings' interiors of spick-and-span diners. Within a few years of Documenta V, photorealist art, although successful commercially, was largely disregarded as being as vulgar and tasteless as the prefabricated petty bourgeois world of margarine, lollipops and bleak parking lots it took as its subjects. 'All that remains is technique', John Hughes wrote angrily in the early 1970s, 'that elaborate, deadpan *verismo* which has propelled Photo-Realism into its popularity among those collectors who, wearied or intimidated by the ideological conflicts of the 1960s, have no appetite left for "difficult" art'.⁷ Hughes' rant sums up what for many critics was photorealism's greatest shortcoming: its superficiality. Apparently there was nothing deep or difficult about the obsession these artists shared to paint with painstaking exactitude the same subject over and over again on the basis of photos, or photonotes, as Estes preferred to call them. While the past fifteen years have seen a rising critical interest in photorealism, the work of Estes, Bechtle and Close has received relatively little scholarly attention. Hughes, like many art historians of his era, was not ready to see the ideological potential inherent in the analogy between deadpan realism and the zombie-like middle class attempting to snapshot their lives into action. Neither could he predict the immense flight photography would take (leading Vilhelm Flusser to claim that we currently live in a photographic universe), or foresee how photorealism anticipated the way photography would take over our perception of the world. With many others, he was stuck in a more traditional view of art when he wrote that 'to draw reality is still to examine thought itself', confirming what was by then a century-long denial by art historians of artists' use of cameras to aid their pictorial practice. Yet it is precisely this prejudice about the so-called deadpan or thoughtless nature of copying which most commentators observe as characteristic of photorealism, that I would like to argue against. Therefore, I would like to suggest that photorealism, in a world dominated by photographic imagery, provides an almost perfect commentary on the role of painting – first after its death proclaimed by Hegel, and subsequently after its negation by the invention of photography. Indeed, we could say, in a Hegelian context, that photorealism resuscitates the illusionism resulting from creating an image of three-dimensional space onto a two-dimensional surface, which Hegel finds so essential for painting. After photography had 'killed' painting, eventually setting it off on

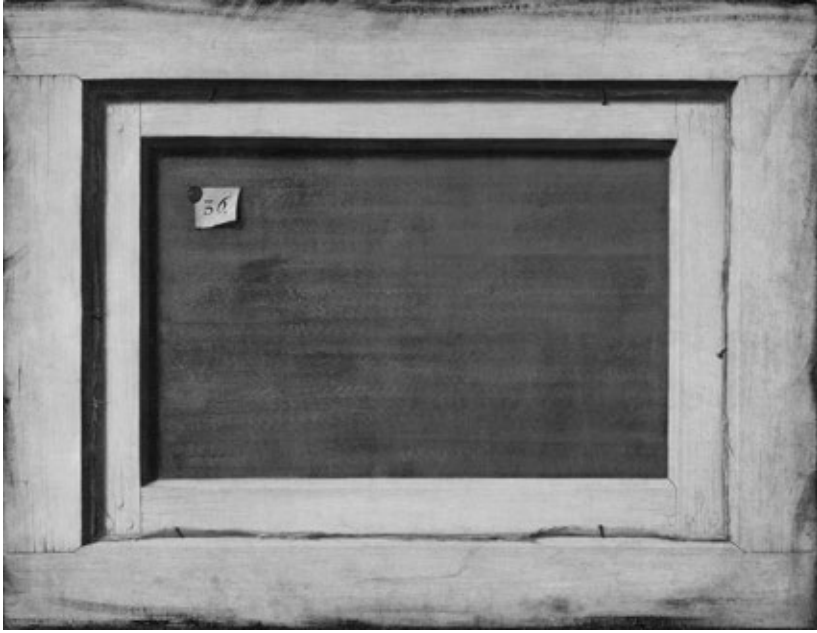
⁷ Weinberg 2005, 51.

a quest for pure materiality, photorealism emerged as a way for painting to revive itself, to become itself again, properly restored as a form of illusionism that invites viewers once more to immerse oneself in it.⁸

If critics did anything, it was to explain away the extreme resemblance to photography as a lazy twentieth-century version of Baroque *trompe l'œil* painting that aimed at fooling the eye of the spectator. However, following Hegel's notion of appearance to this extent, it is not difficult to see that in fact the opposite is true. Traditionally, early modern *trompe l'œils* are self-aware images par excellence: they are ambitious art works that aspire to literally *become* the objects they represent. Their greatest wish is to overcome their limitations as two-dimensional images so as to participate in the world *as objects*. Probably the most perfect embodiment of this aspiration is *Reverse Side of a Painting* by Cornelius Gijsbrechts in the late seventeenth century [Fig. 6.8]. This work was specifically made to be placed against the wall of a *kunstkammer* so that curious visitors would, turning it around, be disappointed to find the same image – the reverse of a painting – but this time in reality. We could say, with Stoichita, that this is the ultimate self-aware image, which in the wake of iconoclasm had achieved full awareness of its being – and of its nothingness. Even if we would present photorealist paintings as contemporary *trompe l'œils*, they possess everything Gijsbrechts' *tour de force* lacks: a sense of depth, any hint of spectacle and, more importantly, reflections or shadows – no real light ever shines *in trompe l'œils* or *from* them. After all, the objects in these paintings are meant to arise out of nowhere so as to fool us, outsmarting our perception by putting us in our place.

Recalcitrant and thought-provoking as *Reverse Side of a Painting* may be, its disguise as an object produces a self-awareness that, however fitting to early modern easel painting, is no longer relevant, I suggest, for paintings created after photography (and modernism, for that matter) – an invention that has resulted in as fundamental a shift in representation as in self-consciousness. (After all, what would our self-image be without a photo?) I would like to argue that the type of self-reflexivity at work in the photorealism of Estes possesses a different kind of complexity than Gijsbrechts' *trompe l'œil* [Fig. 6.8] or Velázquez's *Las Meninas* [Fig. 6.2], which moves away from a Baroque self-awareness towards a Hegelian self-consciousness. Further support for my argument can be found in

8 An elegant discussion of the discrepancy between Hegel's theory of painting and Greenberg's deviant reading of it, resulting in his theory of abstract art, can be found in Houlgate 2000, 61–83.



6.8 Cornelis Gijsbrechts, *Reverse Side of a Painting*, c. 1668–1672 (66.4 × 87 cm). Oil on canvas. Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, inv. ms1989. © HIP / Art Resource, New York.

photorealism's decision to present itself not as an object, as Gijsbrechts' image does, but as painting's negation. To grasp Estes' *Central Savings* [Fig. 6.1] as a particular form of self-consciousness, we will look into Hegel's critique of Kant's philosophical reflection, from which the former's notion of self-consciousness springs.

REFLECTION SEEING ITSELF

Kant defines reflection as that which 'does not concern itself with objects themselves with a view to deriving concepts from them directly, but is that state of mind in which we first set ourselves to discover the subjective conditions under which [alone] we are able to arrive at concepts'.⁹ Essential

⁹ Kant 1968, 267; see also Gasché 2007, 18.

for Kant is the notion that reflection has become the *medium* by which the mind can separate itself from the object, thinking the synthetic unity between concept and object as well as examining the difference between them – all the while observing the unity of this process of reflection as a whole. As Hegel famously points out, this is a rather tight structure whereby that which is being thought gets forever separated from the thinking being, while the whole construct is locked in a synthetic unity by the operation of reflection itself. The only way within Kant's system to understand the nature of this dualism is to find a position outside the synthetic unity to further reflect on the problems caused by *this* reflection, which in turn will pose the same problem, thus setting in motion a series of reflections on reflections *ad infinitum*. Hegel notes that for Kant the understanding is an absolute and immovable finitude, which can reflect onto other things and onto reflection as such but cannot reflect onto *itself*. Within the Kantian system, the subject-object distinction is fixed. Consequently, Hegel reasons that Kant's notion of understanding is *unbending* in the literal sense of being ir-reflective, as it is incapable of moving beyond the fixed subject-object opposition.

Along with Fichte and Schelling, Hegel was among the first to point out that Kant's 'philosophical reflection' is incapable of recognising in itself this fixation, but can only deepen any reflection – just as we see in a *mise en abyme*.¹⁰ In a way, we see a visualisation of this process in the groundless abyss of duplications of the diner's red counter in *Central Savings* in infinite reverberation [Fig. 6.1]. Therefore, within Kant's rigid structure, one is incapable of *overcoming* the separation between subject and object, or between a thinking being and its object of reflection. There is only one way to avoid plummeting into the *mise en abyme* of endless reflection. What the process of mirroring already permits, and Estes' painting confirms, Hegel also fully realised (something, too, that Derrida's notion of deconstruction would later provide): that a mirror reflecting an object also reflects itself *in* that object. What Estes' *Central Savings* overstates through its double reflections – and Kant seems to forget – is that reflection always 'meets' itself in what it reflects. For instance, if we look at the left side of the diner, we see how over the red counter the reflection of the front of the diner in the windows of the *Central Savings* bank literally 'bends back' to itself when it gets re-reflected onto both the main glass window and the silver panelling within the restaurant. The

¹⁰ For discussion, cf. Gardner's chapter in this volume.

diner's reflected façade thus meets itself and 'sees' this meeting reflected in the material off of which it originally bounced. If we assume, for the sake of the argument, that Estes' painting also doubles as a traditional mirror onto the world, it is here most dramatically that we start to see it crack. It is in the moment of this 'self-seeing' that this painting becomes truly self-conscious by finding, in the whirlpool of reflections, not a picture of the world but an image of itself *in the process of reflecting itself*. What we see is a bouncing of sorts: a reflection of a reflection that gets reflected back into its mirror image. I suggest that Estes' paintings provide us with a contemporary version of the shine in Dutch painting that so delighted Hegel.

For Hegel, thinking is a *movement* whereby the self, in order to think about itself, needs to distance the thinking-self from the self-as-object about which it thinks. 'When thinking, I *am free* because I am not in another, rather, I remain utterly in my own sphere, and the object, which to me is the essence, is in undivided unity my being-for-myself; and my moving about in concepts is a movement within myself'. Thinking about the self is, then, a process of seeing the self as its negative, all the while identifying with it. The moment of the split between us thinking about the self and the self as different from itself is thus a movement from dividing the self to returning to the self: 'But in point of fact self-consciousness is the reflection out of the being of the world of sense and perception, and is essentially the return from *otherness* ... As self-consciousness, it is movement; but since what it distinguishes from itself is *only itself* as itself, the difference, as an otherness, is *immediately superseded* for it' (Hegel 1975, 105). The result is not understanding; it is not man who reflects on being but being that knows itself through man, Jean Hyppolite aptly remarked.¹¹ If we translate this situation to *Central Savings* we could say that the movement occurs on two levels.

First, we see in the process of reflection how the letters bounce off, distancing themselves from themselves in their mirror image – *but they bend back* to the reflective surface, and it is this return from otherness that is 'seen' by the reflection, that makes it fully self-conscious in a Hegelian way. The self does not just do this on its own account, but it senses its deepest sense of self when it recognises itself most fully in superseding the difference between thinking being and object of thought. Thinking about ourselves thinking drives us as human beings

¹¹ Hyppolite 1997, 84.

forth, or as Hegel succinctly writes, ‘self-consciousness is *desire* itself’ (*Phenomenology*, § 167).¹²

Second, Estes’ painting as a whole mimics this structure: while it is painting, it appears as its negative, photography, and its many reflections show a deep awareness of this distinction. Further adapting the structure of self-consciousness as a movement, this ‘reflectedness-into-self’ (as Hegel writes), *Central Savings* allows us to see how in self-consciousness, photorealism’s desire has been fulfilled: faced with another reflection, it first lost itself (as photography), then found itself (as painting). What happens next is that the self, Hegel writes, ‘has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self.’ Folding onto itself, it ‘lets the other again go free’ (*Phenomenology*, § 179).

The question arises as to what exactly has freed itself in Estes’ work. As we have seen, Estes engages with two, partly intertwining metaphors for painting: that of a mirror of the world and that of a window onto the world. By letting the diner’s window partly coincide with the picture frame, *Central Savings* attempts to unify these metaphors [Fig. 6.1]. However, it also tries to overcome the distinction between both by allowing the reflections of space extending behind the viewer, made visible ‘in’ the window, to overlay the interior of the diner. The viewer seems to be caught up in between these two reflecting layers. Unlike in *Las Meninas* [Fig. 6.2], where the viewpoint lying outside the pictorial space opposite the row of courtiers is hinted at by the reflection of the king and queen in the mirror, in *Central Savings* the viewer finds herself paradoxically between the diner’s window and the reflections of the bank opposite it. And here the mirror cracks dramatically. If this were actually a photograph, the viewer would see her reflection in the diner window. This is what Estes denies us. In fact, we as viewing subjects do not take part in the spectacle that we see: the reflections we see are between the painting and its appearance. Rather than placing us as viewers in a position to ‘reflect’ and thus understand this painting, Estes shows us how painting understands itself, neither as window nor as mirror, but as the ultimate self-reflection. For something has started to disappear in this process: painting as a medium as such.

12 For an accessible explanation of Hegel’s notion of self-consciousness, see Pippin 2011.

ESSENCE'S OWN SHINING

Much has been written in recent years about art's post-medium condition. Art works might still be driven by the modernist urge for purity (if that ever existed) but art forms have become conflated to such an extent that one can no longer make clear distinctions between media. Art's essence, therefore, must be found outside a specific medium. Estes' painting has conflated the media of photography and painting, yet it has done so on the basis of another medium, that of philosophical reflection. Painting has recognised itself as photography in painting and as painting in photography, and all the while photography has equally emerged and appeared as painting. Both moments of reflection have been made possible by a third medium, that of reflection itself. This has enabled Estes – wittingly or unwittingly – to make a rather bold statement. He presents painting and photography not as opposites but as two sequential periods in the overall movement towards a perfect recording of reality (or essential copy, as Ernst Gombrich would have it). Estes' work, and that of his followers, suggest that photography has continued painting's project within the larger history of realistic representation, within which it first alienated itself from painting as its negation, then ultimately merged with it in photorealism, all the while retaining its otherness in the process of identification. In Hegelian terms, Estes' statement belongs not longer to philosophical reflection but to speculative reflection, which is characterised by a boldness to think through oppositions. Hegel defines speculative reflection as the movement of reflecting itself-into-itself, when it becomes the totality embracing both reflection-into-self and reflection-into-other.¹³ In this spectacularly ambiguous clash, something has been set free. What *trompe l'œil* painting always confirms, in its self-aware play with its being and its nothingness – its objecthood – is for photorealism no longer of any consequence, as the issue of its materiality or medium is vanishing. Attempting to define essence, Hegel writes in *Science and Logic* that the negation of essence is shine, as it is nothing in and of itself. However, as we have seen with Kalf's still life painting, shine is not something that is external to essence, but is deeply linked to it. The shine we see (in Kalf's still life or in the appearance of objects) is essence's own shining.

¹³ Gasché 2007, 63.

‘This shining of essence within it is *reflection*’, Hegel explains. In the immediacy of shine we see, in fact, being, or rather, being’s nothingness. Being is shine, Hegel writes, but he warns that ‘it is not that there is a shine of being *in* essence, or a shine of essence *in* being: the shine in the essence is not the shine of an other, but is rather *shine as such, the shine of essence itself*’.¹⁴ We could say that in the very shine of Estes’ painting, we see the essence of painting, which is, according to photorealism, neither its materiality – despite Greenberg’s lifelong argument – nor its subject matter but, as Hegel pointed out, its capacity to reflect, to think.

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¹⁴ Hegel 2010, 344.

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ROBERT PIPPIN

HEGEL ON PAINTING

Hegel's approach to the arts in his various Berlin lectures puts him in a unique position to address two very ambitious questions. First, given some view of the purpose and value of the practice of art making and art appreciating, what does it mean and what sense can we make out of the fact that there are different arts: visual, literary, musical? Second, what does it mean and what sense can we make of the fact that the ideals and standards of art making change so dramatically in different societies and at different times? These are the two ways Hegel organises his account: systematically and historically. Of course, the answer to both questions might well be: we can make no sense out of the variety of the arts. That is a contingent and wholly accidental fact that raises no interesting philosophical question. And while the second question – what does it mean that aesthetic ideals change? – might be an interesting question, it too is not a philosophical or 'aesthetics' question and is not relevant to any interrogation of the nature and value of art in itself. It is a question for social historians and for them alone.¹

Both of these issues are in play in Hegel's account of the nature and significance of painting. Structurally, in one of Hegel's beloved hierarchies, painting is to be understood as 'between' sculpture and music, doing, in some sense or other, better what sculpture is committed to doing, even as music, in some sense or other, does better what painting attempts. And, as is well known, Hegel's historical schema claims a

1 This is claimed, for example, in the first chapter of Wollheim 1987. For examples of what he is opposing (both of which show, to my mind, that the considerations behind Wollheim's rejection are far too narrow and question-begging), see Gehlen 1960 and Clark 1999. Wollheim's 'psychological' theory depends on an isolation of the individual mindedness, that of the artists, which seems arbitrary and poorly motivated.

historical progression from symbolic to classical to romantic art. Painting is the 'first' romantic art, the art of a dawning modernity.²

At the basis of all such claims is one issue that emerges in Hegel's account of painting. It is quite distinctive, potentially of great significance and deserves a hearing on its own. That issue is what he means by the role of the inner, or inwardness, or subjectivity, *Innerlichkeit*, uniquely in painting. What dimension of human subjectivity is manifest in, or made more comprehensible by, painting? Only an answer to this question could make it possible to understand what it might mean to 'rate' any treatment of such a subject matter with respect to, for example, music. In the following I try to provide a preliminary answer to such a basic question.

First we need a survey of Hegel's most important claims about painting. Some of them are extraordinarily unusual, and his treatment of European painting is highly selective. For example, the great French painters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries play no role whatsoever: no Poussin, Chardin, Greuze, Gros, or even David;³ Hegel instead concentrates on Italian, German and Northern European, especially Dutch, painting, with an occasional reference to the Spanish.⁴ His main thesis

2 We should pause to note the obvious: that Hegel's two approaches – historical, and genre-systematic – do not always line up all that well. Hegel certainly does not believe that the only real art the classical age had was sculpture. It had literature, obviously, but because of a merely preliminary understanding of subjectivity, it could not produce what literature as a genre can best do, something finally realised in modern lyric poetry. I take no position here on the value or implications of such categorical problems and will concentrate on the core of his claim about painting.

3 This is all the more striking since there are plenty of comments about French drama, music, poetry and even French criticism. Hegel refers several times to Goethe's translation of Diderot's *Essai sur la peinture*. And Hegel did visit Paris in August of 1827. Yet there are still no references to French painting in the 1828/1829 lectures.

4 There is a large issue that I do not have the space to discuss (cf. the chapters in this volume by Rush and Grootenboer): namely, Hegel's treatment of Dutch paintings (at least in Hotho's compilation, although the remarks occur in the 1826 lectures as well), and what appear to be his very positive remarks about the likes of van Eyck, Hemling and Scorel – remarks that seem happily resigned to mere displays of skill, and the portrayal of the self satisfactions ('coziness', 'cheerfulness', 'comfort') of the rising bourgeoisie. See Hegel 1975, 598; 2013a, II: 225–227. But Rutter 2010 has shown that this would be a very hasty inference. Occasionally an air of 'repugnance' creeps into Hegel's account.

is stated directly at the outset. While classical sculpture does allow some manifestation of what he calls ‘a character’s spiritual individuality’, so that a Greek statue can be said to be ‘enlivened’, to manifest an inner life (compared with Egyptian statuary, for example), the mode of expression is limited to a material, external form, and the limitations of that external form – marble, stone, clay, bronze – do not truly or fully allow the expression of a ‘person’s own subjective inwardness, the life of his heart [Figs. 7.1 and 7.2],⁵ the soul of his most personal feelings’ [*Der Punkt der inneren Subjektivität, die Lebendigkeit des Gemüts, die Seele der eigenen Empfindung*]. Accordingly, we can admire and study classical sculpture, but it ultimately leaves us cold.⁶

To quote Hegel (1975, 797 – my emphasis; 2013a, III: 17):

For this reason we are at once more at home in painting. Painting, that is to say, opens the way for the first time to the principle of finite and inherently [*in sich*] infinite subjectivity, the principle of our own life and existence, and in paintings we see what is effective and active in ourselves [*was in uns selber wirkt und tätig ist*].

This last line sums up in a very compressed way Hegel’s main claim and sets the task: *what is it* to see an ‘in itself infinite subjectivity’, and so what is effective and active in us, in a painting, if that painting is a work of art?

Hegel will go on to claim later that it is precisely painting’s advantage in these respects, its ability to make *visible* this subjectivity, especially in its affective dimension [*die Seele der eigenen Empfindung*], which is also its limitation. Only some aspects of this self-related subjectivity *can* be made *visible*, and these aspects do not embody the ‘deeper truth’ of such subjectivity, a truth that cannot be fully manifest materially, visibly. (This will have something to do with Hegel’s famous claim that art, all art, has become for us a ‘thing of the past’.) This is largely due to the characteristic

5 Knox almost always translates *Gemüt* as ‘heart’. Here the ‘liveliness of his temperament’ could also serve as a translation, even ‘the liveliness of his mind’.

6 For the point, cf. Heimann’s unpublished Nachschrift of the *Vorlesung über die Philosophie der Kunst*, edited by ed. N. Hebing: I refer here to p. 159 of the manuscript. I am grateful to Niklas Hebing, Birgit Sandkaulker and the Hegel Archiv for making this transcription available to me, and refer to it as ‘Hebing MS’ in the footnotes that follow (nn. 8, 11, 14 and 23). On the ways in which, according to Hegel, classical art must leave us ‘cold’, cf. Squire’s chapter to this volume, p. 128.



7.1 Limestone Egyptian statue of Kai-pu-ptah and Ipep from Giza, c. 2400 BC (height 56 cm). Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, inv. 7444. Wikimedia Commons.



7.2 Greek bronze statue of a victorious athlete, c. 300–100 BC (height 151.5 cm). Los Angeles: Getty Villa, inv. 77.AB. 30. © The J. Paul Getty Museum: Villa Collection, Malibu.

of self-conscious subjectivity that Hegel calls ‘infinity’. This is his way of insisting that the self’s relation to itself in its experience is not a dyadic or subject-object relation. The self to which the self is related *is* the relating self. The relation is circular, not bi-polar, and so Hegel invokes the image of infinity. We shall return to the topic, but his canonical formulation is the following (Hegel 1975, 154; 2013a, I: 204–205):⁷

The animation [*Beseelung*] and life of spirit alone is free infinity; as such, the spirit in real existence is self-relating as something inner [*für sich selbst als Inneres ist*], because in its manifestation it reverts into itself and remains at home with itself. To spirit alone, therefore, is it given to impress the stamp of its own infinity and free return into itself upon its external manifestation.

By contrast, music’s mode of sensible embodiment is more adequate to less determinately material or visual dimensions of self-conscious subjectivity, and poetry ultimately relies on a sensible embodiment that is even more ‘ideal’, in Hegel’s terms, relying on mere signs, a materiality with no inherent or natural connection to content.⁸ The trajectory is a greater degree of abstraction or ideality and more purely conceptual complexity, and so, in that sense, greater ‘success’, greater justice to such ‘in itself infinite subjectivity’.⁹ And this trajectory parallels, in the various material possibilities of outer expression, and in the changing subject matters appropriate to any such materiality, greater and greater expressive adequacy

⁷ See also the references to Hegel’s discussion of the subjectivity/infinity connection in n. 18 below.

⁸ Cf. Hebing MS, pp. 163–165.

⁹ In one sense more abstract, because it transforms what Hegel calls ‘real objectivity’ into ‘intellectual objectivity’, and this largely because it is not bound to three-dimensional representation. It is an ‘abstract’ representation of three-dimensionality (Hegel 1975, 796). But in another sense, spatial form is itself ‘the most abstract thing in nature’ (Hegel 1975, 807) and so painting is in that sense *less* abstract, because ‘it is called on to express the inner life particularized in itself and therefore possessed of a wealth of varied specifications’. Cf. the contrast with sculpture in this regard (where sculpture’s materiality is called abstract, and contrasted with the particularity available for representation in painting), in the 1823 lecture notes of Hotho (see *VPKN* 1820/1821 and *VPKN* 1823). See also *VPKN* 1820/1821, 155: ‘die Malerie ist eine abstrakte Kunst’. For more on the more modern notion of abstraction and its relevance to Hegel, see also Pippin 2002.

in doing justice to what he also sometimes calls '*Innigkeit*', or a self-related inwardness in its proper relation to the outer that has the connotation of 'intimacy' or ardour. (One could say: *Innerlichkeit* as 'felt' is the proper domain of painting.) As Hegel understands the issues, painting, as the first romantic art, is thus the first appropriate art of modernity, the first aesthetic manifestation of the 'truth of such a self-related subjectivity, where 'first' means first in both the historical and systematic series Hegel has proposed.¹⁰

However, we should also note that Hegel is not completely consistent on the status of painting as a kind of prelude for, or initial version of, music and poetry. That dimension of subjectivity appropriate to painting he calls the 'concentration of spirit in itself' (Hegel 1975, 815; 2013a, III: 40 – *die Konzentration des Geistes in sich*). We are not in a position to know what this means yet, but we do know from this passage that music's greater abstraction, its near mathematical form, does not allow much of an external, perceptible manifestation of inner life (its materiality is more that of a vehicle), and poetry too can only provide something Hegel calls 'incomplete'. Painting alone can allow a full expression *in the external* of 'complete [affective or felt] inwardness [self-intimacy]' [*volle Innigkeit*]. It is even able to make manifest something of the general significance of some 'feeling', even while portraying a concrete particular. These – a dialectical unity of inner and outer, and between universal and particular – sound like supreme Hegelian desiderata in general, and they would seem to elevate painting's status, at least above the arts the materiality or externality of which is merely as a vehicle or even arbitrary.¹¹

There is much more to Hegel's account of painting than the central questions just summarised: What is the content or subject matter that is uniquely appropriate to painting? (Not to mention: is there one? That is, *one*?) And its subsequent implications: How is that subject matter apparent in religious, landscape, genre and portrait painting? Of what *significance* is painting's capacity to express such content, or why is it important that painting be able to do this? Hegel has a lot of things to

10 Another unmanageably large issue: one of the many synonyms for the Hegelian notion of modernity, especially important here, is 'Christianity'. He is not referring primarily to post-sixteenth century Europe.

11 In the 1828/1829 lectures (Nachschrift Heimann), Hegel stresses such a point himself: '*Das Schöne ist Allgemeines und besondres, Äußerliches, und nicht getrennt, sondern auf eine Weise, wo beide Bestimmungen sich verbinden*' (Hebing Manuscript, p. 18)

say about many other topics, such as two-dimensionality, colour, the differences between classical art and modern (understood as essentially Christian) art, and, as we have seen, about which European paintings best fulfil this distinctive purpose of painting, and, ultimately, about the fate of painting.¹² But it is already very clear that he has a unique, radical and so quite controversial answer to a traditional question in aesthetics: given that not every painting or drawing, perhaps not every painting hung in a museum, is an art work, when, under what conditions, is a painting an art work? That answer is: when it involves a distinct treatment of a distinct subject matter. Such a claim about a subject matter is what makes Hegel's claim so unusual. Painting can make appear ('shine'),¹³ can render in visible and 'lively' form the 'liveliness' of subjectivity or mindedness in its self-relatedness, a more abstract or logical term for human self-consciousness. That distinctive subject matter is described in such a wide variety of ways that it is a daunting task simply to arrive at some overview of these multiple descriptions of what he appears to think amount to variations on the same theme.

In the first place, we can note that Hegel's treatment of the issue of this subject matter sets his account off from many post-Kantian accounts, and this not merely because he is exclusively interested in fine art, not the beauty of nature. For while he freely uses the language of beauty (as in 'the spiritual beauty' [*geistige Schönheit*] in Raphael's Madonnas), he also makes clear that beauty as such, and any putative distinct aesthetic pleasure in the beautiful, at least as these are traditionally understood, are not his topics, not what he regards as significant in art works. He tells us that 'above all it is not the visible beauty [*sinnliche Schönheit*] of the figures but the spiritual animation [*geistige Beseelung*] whereby mastery is displayed and which leads to the mastery of the presentation (1975, 801; 2013a, III: 21). In the 1820/1821 lectures, he notes, as if the claim were unproblematic (he declares it *bekannt*) that the beautiful is the representation of the true (*VPKN*, 23). While Hegel agrees with Kant that what is distinctive in aesthetic appreciation is that all practical or 'interested' relations to either the object or the scene depicted or to the art object have been suspended or cancelled, he is willing to go much farther than Kant's disinterestedness as such, in characterising this non-practical relation, and claim that the art work requires of us a 'wholly theoretical'

12 For a helpful discussion of these elements and more, see Houlgate 2000, 61–82.

13 On the significance of the word, see Grootenboer's chapter in this volume.

[*ganz theoretisch*] response (Hegel 1975, 835; 2013a, III: 64).¹⁴ For Kant, of course, going anywhere near such an intellectual response in aesthetic appreciation would be to confuse determining and reflective judgment and so reduce the aesthetic response to treating the object as an instance of a concept, missing completely the element of ‘free play’ that makes it distinctive. But, as is clear throughout all versions of the lectures, by ‘*theoretisch*’, Hegel does not mean straightforward concept application (much less scientific or empirical inquiry), but (and here a major question for his account, since this claim is hardly self-evident) he means *a still sensible and affective recognition of lived dimensions of human subjectivity in their ‘liveliness’*, something apparent already in his reference to spiritual animation, *geistige Beseelung*. Whatever such appreciation is, it involves something very different from the mere application of the ‘concept of liveliness’. For one thing, Hegel’s whole architectonic (with regard to ‘Absolute Spirit’) assumes that the aesthetic *manner* of contemplative regard is different from the representational (or religious) manner, and the conceptual (philosophical) manner. A typical passage occurs in his discussion of poetry, which he credits, as he does all the arts, for overcoming any ‘separation [*Trennung*] of feeling and vision from ... intellectual thinking’, and, in achieving this ‘liberation’ from ‘that separation between thinking, which is concentrated on the universal, and feeling and vision, which seize on the individual’, poetry and the other arts achieve the expression of ‘concrete liveliness [*konkrete Lebendigkeit*]’, and so a ‘reconciliation [*Versöhnung*] with the universality of thought’ (1975, 1006; 2013a, III: 281–282).¹⁵ These desiderata of art as such are most adequately realised in one way in Greek art, and in another, quite different way, in lyric poetry. Clearly, this assumes that there is a way for our intellectual or theoretical capacities to be engaged *in* such a sensible and affective appreciation of spiritual liveliness – one can even say here what it feels

14 There is a more detailed discussion of Kant in Hegel’s 1820/1821 lectures: *VPKN* (1820/1821), 27–30; cf. also Hebing MS, pp. 16–18.

15 At Hegel 1975, 1128 (2013a, III: 437–438), Hegel is well aware of the Kantian problem. He notes that a philosopher (at least a philosophising ‘at peace with itself [*berühigte*]’) may ‘animate’ his understanding with his ‘feeling’, and exchange a mere philosophical comprehension with ‘the free play [*freies Spiel*] of particular aspects’. Schiller is his example. He also notes that art must ‘conceal [*verbergen*]’ this ‘inner’ sensible unity lest art ‘fall into the prosaic tone of expounding them didactically’. There is a sense in which this is not all that different from Kant. See Pippin 1996.

like to be a self-conscious being, how that dimension is ‘lived’ – and in a way that denies any strict distinction between determining and reflective judgments, which in turn denies (as he does vigorously and constantly since the first Jena writings) any putative strict logical separation of concept and intuition in any experience, any claim that they are independent contributors to experience. That topic, far and away the most important topic in Hegel’s relation to Kant, would take us far afield¹⁶. What we need now is just to note that for Hegel art works can compel our attention in a way that involves some sort of epistemic component – a recognitional component in which we ‘sensibly-affectively’ experience important dimensions of our own subjectivity, now concretely expressed, and so engage in a kind of attempt at self-knowledge – the modality of which is tied to the unique embodiment of human subjectivity available in art.

But what is that unique embodiment? It is the embodiment of ‘self-related subjectivity [*für sich seiende Subjektivität*]’ (1975, 802; 2013a, III: 24). Hegel is here specifying a dimension available to painting as a romantic art that is a specification of the general task he assigned to all art early in the introduction (1975, 30; 2013a, I: 51):¹⁷

Things in nature are only immediate and single, while man as spirit duplicates himself [*verdoppelt sich*], in that (i) he is as things in nature are, but (ii) he is just as much for himself; he sees himself, represents himself to himself, thinks, and only on the strength of this active placing himself before himself is he spirit [*nur durch dies tätige Fürsichsein Geist ist*].

Stated in another summary way (1975, 31; 2013a, I: 52):

16 See Pippin 1989, 2005 and 2014.

17 The passage specifies what has to be called a double doubling for *Geist*. First *Geist* distinguishes itself from its natural being, and so exists as both a natural and ‘spiritual’ being (what he will later call an ‘amphibian’), and second, *Geist* as such is ‘double’, or as conscious, always also self-conscious, in an unusual self-relation. Painting will also have a version of this dual doubleness. It depicts an object, but also expresses the artist’s ‘take’ or view on the object. And the beholder as well stands in a relation to the object both visually and also reflectively or ‘theoretically’, in the sense of aesthetic intelligibility I think Hegel is struggling to make clear. And any such dimension is also itself potentially self-conscious, as in philosophical aesthetics.

The universal need for art, that is to say, is man's rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes [*widererkennt*] again his own self.

It is important to emphasise here that Hegel is saying that there is a crucial link between our own duality or self-relatedness and the duality in painting, essentially between whatever is depicted, and its '*Schein*' or appearance, the distinctive way it shows up for the artist and us, the 'take' on it by the artist, made available to us. Only a self-conscious or reflective being can see a painted canvas *as a painting*, because only such a being can see both the physical properties of the object and the 'mindedness' inherent in its appearance. As he says in the 1820/1821 lectures, echoing the '*widererkennt*' above, 'the connection between us and the beautiful is that we see the nature of our own essence [*die Nature unseres eigenen Wesens*] in the beautiful' (*VPKN*, 29–30). That essence is our own duality, the way we show up for ourselves in various self-conceptions that are not the result of any self-observation, any immediate presence of the self to itself, but since not immediate, always involve some not yet fulfilled realisation.¹⁸ We are not simply what we are, or we need some self-conception to be what we are, in a way analogous to how a painting, or an object depicted in it, is not simply what it is, as it would be in ordinary experience. It is 'lifted' out of nature in that sense and 'idealised'.¹⁹ (One of the core claims in Hegel is that any such self-relatedness remains incomplete apart from its relation to another self-consciousness. This dimension is present in paintings-as-manifestations-of-subjectivity in the address to a beholder implicit in all paintings displayed or shown – i.e. all paintings. But this relation can only be proleptic and implicit in painting. It can be said to address us, but that address cannot be iterated in response to us.) What is so distinctive about painting is that it can make all this not only *visible*, but sensible in an *affective* sense as well. This is a difficult point to which we shall be returning frequently.

18 Cf. Pinkard 2017 and his language about what 'shows up' for us: this as something in the world, not the result of subjective projection.

19 As in the passage just quoted and Hegel 1975, 49 (2013a, I: 75.): 'Of course we may often hear favourite phraseology [*beliebte Redensart*] about man's duty to remain in immediate unity with nature; but such unity, in its abstraction, is purely and simply rudeness and ferocity, and by dissolving this unity for man, art lifts him with gentle hands out of and above imprisonment in nature [*hebt ihn mit milden Händen über die Naturbefangenheit hinweg*].'

The self recognised is said most often to be *Gemüt*, the human emotional experience of the human, or ‘heart’, *that* dimension of its status as *Geist* (primarily ‘feeling’, captured best, as noted, by *Innigkeit*, where such a feeling is a kind of self-‘intimacy’), but it is often given a uniquely Hegelian gloss. A little later he characterises painting’s subject matter as ‘a reflection of spirit [*Wiederschein des Geistes*] in which the spirit only reveals its spiritual quality [*seine Geistigkeit*] by cancelling [*aufhebt*] the real existent and transforming it into a mere shining [*Scheinen*, or manifesting or seeming] of the spiritual [*im Geistigen*] for the spiritual’ (1975, 805; 2013a, III: 27). This prepares the way for him to explain how such self-related subjectivity is ‘really’ the subject matter of painting even if the painting is a landscape or still life.

One more element: the ‘active for-itselfness’ [*tätige Fürsichsein*] mentioned earlier is characterised as a process of self-alienation in the external or material (in several dimensions throughout many aspects of Hegel’s work), and a return to itself. It has thus *achieved*, through some sort of struggle, which has presumably left some sort of visual and so pictorial traces, a ‘for itself’ determinacy, a self-conception, that is, uniquely for humans (see the contrast above with things of nature) self-constituting (as above), and only thereby *is* ‘*Geist*’. The formula is: ‘the spiritual inner life ... can come into appearance in the external only as retiring into itself out of it [*die nur im Äußeren kann zum Vorschein kommen, als aus demselben in sich hineingehend*]’ (1975, 805; 2013a, III: 27).²⁰

20 This notion of a self-constituting self-relation as human subjectivity helps explain Hegel’s highly unusual comments about the chief ‘physical element’ of painting: light. Light is said to be ‘pure identity with itself and therefore purely self-reposing, the earliest ideality, the original self of nature’. Light *illuminates* the painting; it does not move it or push or change it; it is not in a material relation to the object, but is the element within which, by virtue of which, the object can be what it is, intelligible; the relation is thus ‘ideal’. That is, it is the necessary element whereby the painting can be actually what it is potentially: visible. In different lights, the painting is different. The relation of the self to the self is also not a material but an ideal relation. That is, it is not a subject-object relation (or observational) in a similar sense. Self-understanding allows *Geist* to be what it is as *Geist*, a self-constituting being; it is what it takes itself to be, is what it is only in the ‘light’ of this self-regard, and in that sense is an ideal being. In the 1823 lectures, Hegel calls light ‘subjective nature’ and ‘the physical I’ (*VPKN*, 473).



7.3 Antonio Allegri da Correggio, *Mary Magdalen Reading in a Landscape*, c. 1522 (29 × 39 cm). Oil on canvas. Formerly in Dresden (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemaeldegalerie Alte Meister, inv. 154), destroyed in the Second World War. © Alinari / Art Resource, New York.

This adds yet another layer to that dimension of subjective self-relatedness available in painting. A revealing, if not quite typical, example of such a ‘return’ for Hegel is Correggio’s Mary Magdelene in Dresden – lost during the Second World War [Fig. 7.3]. The strange-sounding kind of ‘doubleness’ in the subjectivity represented best by painting, that externalisation and then return to inner repose, is described in her case as the depiction of a repentant sinner about whom we can say, ‘now’, or post-repentance, that the sin was not a true expression of her, not seriously [*daß es ihr mit der Sünde nicht Ernst ist*], even though only the rejection of sin could have made that clear. His full description of this ‘return to herself’ is (1975, 868; 2013a, III: 106–107):

The artist has left no traces of reflection on one of the circumstances which could hint back [*zurückdeuten*] to sin and guilt; she is unconscious of those times, absorbed [*vertieft*] only in her present situation, and this faith, this sensitiveness, this absorption [*Versinken*] seems to be her entire and real character.

The implication is that nothing about her true nature, her *'eigentlicher, ganzer Charakter'*, could have been immediately or simply represented, and so her (or anyone's) real character is apparent not in any representation of purity or innocence, in *sinlessness* or simple passive *oubli de soi*, but only in the results of a struggle with and rejection of (in this case) sin, a rejection that shows that even when sinning, she was no 'sinner'.²¹ Only thereby can the return to herself be marked by a confidence and self-possession so complete as to allow this visible mark of genuineness, deep absorption. To follow Hegel, we have to believe that in the painting itself – in, literally, what we can see – Mary Magdalene is neither innocent, nor a guilty ex-sinner, nor self-deceived about her sinful past; that she has 'returned' to her self in a way marked by such self-possession that her complete absorption in the reading is a capacity she has earned or achieved. The genuineness of her self-understanding is reflected by her confident immersion in the book; shameless in her half-naked state and without a naïve indifference to death or the sufferings of Christ. I think one can see what he means. This is a valuable marker of the double or reflected subjectivity that Hegel singles out as the true object of painting. (That Mary's absorption is not simple self-forgetfulness, but an implicitly self-related and achieved genuineness is partly achieved by her nakedness not manifesting innocence but something like a mature absence of shame, given what she has been through. Not a self-evident point, I concede.)

Another good example is given later, when Hegel discusses Raphael's *Transfiguration* [Fig. 7.4]. He notes that the painting's unity has been criticised because it seems two paintings stuck together, Christ's ascension above, and the chaos surrounding the afflicted, blind child below. But Hegel speaks again of a 'double action', a duality that is actually a unity. The end of Christ's visible presence on earth is also the beginning of his (higher, more 'ideal') spiritual presence, as he says, 'wherever two or three are gathered' in his name. He notes the two pointing gestures, one up towards Christ and the other towards the child, are indications of how Christ's transcendence is fully compatible with his immanent presence, and so even the love of God for mankind requires the 'logical'

21 This example carries more weight for Hegel than can be discussed here. It is a crucial example in his discussion of 'The essentialities and determinations of reflection' in the *Logic of Essence*, the second book of *The Science of Logic*, when Hegel tries to explain the claim in a remark that 'the positive and the negative are the same' (cf. Hegel 1999 and Hegel 2010).



7.4 Raphael, *Transfiguration*, 1516–1520 (405 cm × 278 cm). Tempera on wood. Vatican: Pinacoteca Vaticana. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of the Archiv, Institut für Klassische Archäologie und Museum Klassischer Abgüsse, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich.

structure of separation or otherness as well as indwelling unity (1975, 860; 2013a, III: 96).²²

But Hegel does not stay at this level of abstraction. Another step greatly specifies this ‘subject matter’ and it quickly makes his position sound extreme and implausible. In explaining further this notion of ‘withdrawing’ out of its suffering and into itself, and in contrasting the ‘peaceful repose’ [*ein stilles Ausruhen*] of Greek heroes with the ‘bliss’ [*Seligkeit*] visible in painting (a bliss possible only after ‘conflict and agony’ and when a soul has ‘triumphed over its sufferings’),²³ Hegel says something he repeats several times thereafter: that religious or ‘passionless’ [*leidenschaftslos*] love is the true, ideal subject matter of all painting. So the very best subject matter for painting, wherein it can best be what painting is (that is, in his typical formulation, when painting agrees with itself, when it is what painting essentially is) is in the depiction of ‘the reconciliation of the individual heart with God’. Stated with all the flourishes (1975, 816; 2013a, III: 41):

The soul wills *itself*, but it wills itself in something other than what it is in its individuality and therefore it gives itself up in the face of God [*sie gibt sich deshalb auf gegen Gott*] in order to find and enjoy itself in him. This is characteristic of *love*, spiritual depth [*Innigkeit*] in its truth, that religious love without desire which gives to the human spirit reconciliation [*Versöhnung*], peace, and bliss [*Seligkeit*].

This contrast between Greek and modern art is interesting in itself. Hegel goes on to explain the inadequate notion of death in the Greek form of life, and the absence of religious love, as a further explanation of why sculpture is the ideal art of the Greeks, and painting is an essentially Christian art. But the subject matter claim is the essential one, and he goes very far with it (1975, 824; 2013a, III: 51).²⁴:

22 The painting could even be read as a Hegelian allegory about the self-transcendence of painting as an art. Christ’s physical departure opens the possibility of a higher spiritual presence in the communal life of *Geist*. He is ‘seen’ more truthfully by the blind boy. This at least suggests something about the transcendence of painting in music and poetry.

23 Cf. also Hebing MS, p. 166.

24 Cf. also Hegel 1975, 539–540 (2013a, II: 155): ‘The true essence of love consists in giving up the consciousness of oneself, forgetting oneself in another self, yet in this surrender and oblivion having and possessing oneself alone. This

As the most perfect [*vollkommensten*] subject for painting I have already specified inwardly satisfied love, the object of which is not a purely spiritual ‘beyond’ [*Jenseits*] but is present, so that we can see love itself before us in what is loved. The supreme and unique form of this love is Mary’s love for the Christ-child ...

Where does this all leave us? It first leaves us with a dizzying array of claims, all of which Hegel clearly thinks are related, and onto the same answer. Consider what we have seen: that painting ‘opens the way for the first time to the principle of finite and inherently infinite subjectivity’; that our relation to painting should be understood as ‘theoretical’, but in a way that presumes no ‘separation’ between the affective and the intellectual, and that involves a self-recognition on the part of the beholder; that painting concerns itself with ‘spiritual liveliness’ and ‘spirit’s concentration in itself’; that the subject matter of painting is self-related subjectivity, an ‘active for-itselfness’; or it is the human heart, temperament or *Gemüt*; that every painting transforms any ‘real existent’ into the spiritual; that this self-related subjectivity is, must be, the result of a withdrawal from some external suffering into a repose with itself; only thereby is it what it is; and that the paradigm instance of *all* these apparently disparate versions of such achieved self-conscious subjectivity is religious love, primarily of the Madonna for the Christ child.

Obviously, the first thing to say is that, assuming we can understand how all these accounts come to fruition in the claim about religious love, in what sense should we understand this account not to be an account of *one type* of painting, religious paintings about human-divine love, but as an account of what *painting*, with regard to its distinctness as an art, actually is?

Consider first, landscapes. How does Hegel include landscapes within what he calls ‘the absolute spiritual ideal’ as ‘the essential subject matter of painting’ [*des absoluten geistigen Ideals als des wesentlichsten Inhaltes der romantischen Malerei*] (1975, 831; 2013a, III: 60)? When Hegel contrasts an ordinary experience of a landscape with a painted landscape, he emphasises again that ‘what’ is being painted is not the landscape itself; is not a mere carefully mimetic representation of the world, at least not if the image is a work of fine art.²⁵ The subject matter is actually, still, some

reconciliation of the spirit with itself and the completion of itself to a totality is the Absolute ...’

25 Stated more formally at Hegel 1975, 155 (2013a, I: 205): ‘Thus the truth of art cannot be mere correctness, to which the so-called imitation of nature is restricted;

dimension of human subjectivity, or in this case the affective, emotional meaning of the natural world, selected and displayed just this way so as to manifest various experiential states. In this sense the ‘objects’ of a landscape painting are not the mountains, rivers, or forests depicted, but a kind of significance that we can only see when nature is ‘doubled’, transformed into an appearance or ‘showing’ of such spirituality, a *Schein*. That is what a landscape painter does. In that respect his goal is not the conformity of the painting with nature but to show ‘the correspondence of the portrayed object with itself’, which is said to be ‘reality ensouled for itself’ [*die für sich beseelte Realität ist*] (1975, 834; 2013a, III: 63); that is, with what it is in its true (affective) significance. So even natural objects can be said to be both just what they are, in their immediate being, and reflected as what they truly are in their affective meaning, when treated as objects of painting. That is what he means by reality ‘ensouled for itself’. It is ensouled because it is affectively intelligible; it means something affectively, and a great landscape can evoke that affective intelligibility *in* the scene; and so can avoid the implication of any mere subjective projection. *Its* intelligibility, *its* availability for a form of sensible or affective intelligibility, is its ‘soul’, its ‘life’.²⁶ Of course, such a notion of affective intelligibility assumes such controversial matters as there being intentional content to affective states, not to mention no ‘separation’ between thought and feeling, and those assumptions are worthy of several independent discussions.

Moreover, we are natural beings as well, and we experience in landscapes what Hegel calls an ‘echo of the heart’ [*einen Anklang an das Gemüt*] in the ‘free liveliness [*Lebendigkeit*] of nature’, liveliness being another synonym for ensouled, or intelligible in this emotionally available way. Moreover, Hegel emphasises the way a painted landscape can isolate and emphasise what he is willing to call the spiritual dimensions *of nature*, which is experienced by us as a correspondence of ‘*Stimmungen*’, moods in one sense, but a kind of natural attunement in a broader sense, a fit between an experienced emotion and some objective correlate. This is the affective-sensible version of the ‘fit’ between our demand for intelligibility and the world’s being intelligible, the supreme principle of

on the contrary, the outer must harmonize with an inner which is harmonious in itself, and, just on that account, can reveal itself as itself in the outer’.

26 In the 1823 lectures, Hegel remarks on how painting, more than any other art, combines the ‘two extremes’: the interests of the object, and the interests of subjective art (*VPKN*, 474).

Hegel's idealism, expressed most rigorously in his *Science of Logic* and in his confidence that the forms of thought just are the forms of being.

We are clearly dangerously deep into the distinctive vocabulary of Hegel's speculative philosophy, but we can appreciate what he is after by concentrating on the fact that painting turns anything from what it is ordinarily or unreflectively experienced as into a 'showing' of something, a *Schein*. This is what he had meant in the passage, some of which was quoted earlier (1975, 805; 2013a, III: 27):

So painting does indeed work for our vision, but in a way that the object it presents does not remain an actual total spatial natural existent but becomes a reflection of spirit [*Wiederschein des Geistes*] in which the spirit only reveals its spiritual quality [*seine Geistigkeit*] by cancelling [*aufhebt*] the real existent and transforming it into a mere shining [*Scheinen*] of the spiritual [*im Geistigen*] for the spiritual.

This claim allows us to connect the doubleness of painting [*Wiederschein*] – the fact that at work in an art painting is both the object depicted and the painter's reflection of that object, and thereby what it shows itself *as*, in and by means of painting, its *Schein* – with the double subjectivity theme introduced in the first part here. The claim can be simply formulated as: only in a world of self-conscious subjects could there be objects like painting, because only self-interpreting beings can recognise objects that embody such an attempted self-interpretation; or, only beings who can recognise that such self-interpretations can be false or inauthentic, can appreciate the task of a faithful interrogation of the self-relatedness embodied in an art work. The more general point that connects the two is Hegel's denial that, while any form of human subjectivity is a reflected relation, a self-relation, no aspect of the self-relation is immediate, the simple presence of the self to itself. In the same sense, a painting (if it is art) is not a direct mimetic depiction, but a *Schein*, an appearing *as*, or a 'minded view'. This issue is among the most complicated and possibly the most important in all of Hegel, so it is difficult to deal with economically. It goes to our first indication that painting is 'about' a potentially 'infinite' subjectivity, one of the several ways he characterises the true object of painting as a distinct art.²⁷ The claim is that there is no

²⁷ See Hegel 2013b, §163: 'When infinity is finally an object for consciousness, and consciousness is aware of it *as what it is*, then consciousness is *self-consciousness*.' And §178: 'Self-consciousness exists *in and for itself* because

straightforward subject-*object* relation in this self-relation, even though there is some form of doubleness or separation of the self from itself, as well as a distinctive unity. The self-relation is not observational or any form of self-inspection. To say, however, that our self-relation is, on the contrary, self-constitutive, or that we are what we take ourselves to be, is not to say, however, that a self-constitution is uncontrolled and potentially arbitrary. Whatever any subject takes itself to be, any aspect of its practical identity, its self-avowals, expressions of deep commitments and the like, is provisional, realised, Hegel claims, only in deeds that manifest their genuineness, or not (as in the case of exaggerated or self-deceived avowals, however sincerely made). His general formulation for this is that the inner can only truly be what it is, what it turns out to be, in the outer.

There is more to be said about this inner-outer relation before things can get any clearer,²⁸ but its relevance to painting is as immediate as its relevance to action. In the former case, any painting (again, if it is an art work; not all paintings are art works) is an outer for which we must seek the inner, even though that inner *is* just what is manifested in the outer. In the latter case, attempting to understand outer bodily movements requires that we understand what inner intention rationalised the deed for the agent, although what that intention is is only at work and accessible in the deed itself (and not by asking the agent, or not reliably anyway). The most significant manifestation of the relation, the realisation of *Geist* as such in the outer, is the realisation of freedom, defined by Hegel as ‘being-with-self-in the-other’, or paradigmatically, human love (Hegel’s chief example of realised human freedom.) That already suggests a link back to themes we have already seen.

But consider the bearing of all this metaphysics on painting. One way in which Hegel tries to bring all these themes together is in a discussion of the great importance of two-dimensionality in painting, especially as opposed to sculpture. That requirement means for Hegel that our themes

and by way of its existing in and for itself for an other; i.e., it exists only as recognized. The concept of its unity in its doubling, of infinity realizing itself in self-consciousness, is that of a multi-sided and multi-meaning intertwining, such that, on one hand, the moments within this intertwining must be strictly kept apart from each other, and on the other hand, they must also be taken and cognized at the same time as not distinguished, that is, they must be always taken and cognized in their opposed meanings’.

28 See the discussion in Pippin 2014, 139–143.

of a self-related or 'doubled' subjectivity (consciousness as always also self-consciousness) is of a piece with the kind of duality or internal self-relatedness that makes a depiction an art work and not a mere pictorial record. He says about sculpture that it is relatively 'indifferent' to the spectator, independent of her, does not directly address the spectator since she can walk all around the statue from any point of view. Such an art work is 'self-reposing, self-complete, and objective' [*innerlich auf sich Beruhende, Abgeschlossene und Objektive ist*]. Here is what he says, by contrast, about painting (1975, 806; 2013a, III: 28):

Whereas in painting the content is subjectivity, more precisely the inner life inwardly particularized, and for this very reason the separation [*Entzweiung*] in the work of art between its subject and the spectator must emerge [*hervortreten*] and yet must immediately be dissipated [*auflösen*] because, by displaying what is subjective, the work, in its whole mode of presentation, reveals its purpose as existing not independently on its own account but for subjective apprehension, for the spectator.

What he means by saying that there must be both an address to an independent spectator, and the cancelling or dissolution of that very separation, is important in everything he says afterwards, even if it is typical of Hegel to conjoin what appear to be impossible requirements. It is yet another example of a duality that is also a unity.²⁹ His overall point in the paragraph is to emphasise the value of the 'idealising' aspect of two-dimensionality, as if the worked over and so subjectively created depiction/illusion is what makes the 'appearing' aspect and so the duality inherent in painting possible. If a painting is a work of art, its unavoidability calls attention to its status as *Schein*, not a simple echo of the thing depicted. This dual aspect is what makes it possible for a painting to manifest the object as reflected or appearing to a subject (and so a separation with the beholder, something shown *to* the beholder) and that it is nonetheless *the object's* appearing or *Schein*, and a dissolution of such a separation, an aspect that draws the beholder *into* that shining, requiring of her an articulation of what is appearance and what is 'that

²⁹ It of course brings to mind Michael Fried's Diderotian problematic: the painting's fiction that it is indifferent to, closed off to, the beholder, even as it is clearly made to be beheld. See Fried 1998.

which appears', requiring, just by virtue of that mark of its subjectivity, an immersion into it in itself.³⁰

A realistic or mimetic statue is, on the other hand, like another version of the object or person depicted, and has fewer (although by no means no) technical means for intimating either the artist's subjectivity, or for inviting the viewer's involvement in working out the appearance-reality distinction. Hegel goes on in insisting on the effects of this two-dimensional and idealising component. In painting (1975, 805; 2013a, III: 28):

The spectator is as it were in it from the beginning [*von Anfang an mit dabei*], is counted in with it, and the work exists only for this fixed point, i.e. for the individual apprehending it. Yet for this relation to intuition [*Anschauung*] and its spiritual reflection [*geistigen Reflex*] the pure *appearance* of reality is enough, and the actual totality of spatial dimensions is really disturbing [*störend*] because in that case the objects perceived retain an existence of their own and do not simply appear as configured artificially by spirit for its own contemplation [*Anschauung* – probably better translated as intuition or seeing].

This allows him to conclude as follows:

In painting, however, satisfaction does not lie in the objects as they exist in reality [*im wirklichen Sein*] but in the purely theoretical interest [*in dem bloß theoretischen Interesse*] in the external reflection of the inner life, and consequently painting dispenses with all need and provision for a reality and an organization totally spatial in all dimensions.

The idea is that painting is uniquely capable of capturing *in materially embodied, visible form* (a manifestation of an outer with an inner) what we have been calling the duality inherent in human subjectivity, its characteristic ontological uniqueness. That Hegel claims that this is all possible only thanks to Christianity, that it is absent from the Greeks

30 This is not to deny that such a 'duality' can be missed. Those art historians who think of art history as a science, or as exclusively concerned with authenticating the history of different techniques, technical innovations, the transmission of influence or patronage, miss it. As do those who think of this interpretive requirement as essentially reactive, as going on 'in' the interpreter.

or non-Christian civilisations, is an issue we can leave for another day. Painting is distinctive because the inner-outer dimension of this phenomenon is literally *visible* in painting, in painting's material or outer expression, in a way that it is not so for music or poetry. Every art painting embodies a self-conception and can be said to be attempting to realise such a self-conception, a showing or appearing of what it takes itself to be. Its status, what it invites, is thus like a face or a gesture within the painting, intimating its other, *what* is appearing. This is why Hegel calls a painting a 'thousand-eyed Argus', like – but infinitely more difficult to interpret than – a human or two-eyed face (1975, 153; 2013a, I: 203). And in painting that which appears can both be seen and not be seen *in* the objects depicted. A musical note is not a representation like this (although in a different way, it can be said to have an outer and inner), and poetic language also bears meaning in a way in which such meaning is not *visible* in the letters and lines and sentences and paragraphs; they are mere vehicles. As noted, this also means for Hegel that painting's ability to express such an inner is limited to what *can* be made visible, and that is only one dimension of this interiority. It has other dimensions that require musical and poetic expression, not to mention religious representation and philosophical conceptuality.

And this dimension of subjectivity is treated by Hegel in a way that presumes a great deal of his full philosophical position. For, as we have seen, 'subjectivity' is used here elliptically, such that it does not ultimately refer to individual subjectivity alone, but such individuals in relations of dependence and independence with other subjects in a dynamic historical process Hegel treats as the progressive realisation of human freedom. In the aesthetics lectures, this is alluded to by Hegel's rather indirect suggestion that what true subjectivity consists in is a relation with another, which, while a relation of dependence, is also a self-realised true independence, most manifest in relations of human love [*bei sich selbst sein im Anderen*], and supremely manifest when not subject to the contingencies of romantic love. That is figured here as divine or religious ('passionless') love, but could just as well be described as the philosophical love of the truth, and, reciprocally, the availability of truth as the object of such love. (In general, this is what I think Hegel is referring to when he refers to the divine. The god of the philosophers, in other words.) This means that in all such cases, because of its separation from itself, its struggle to be who the subject is, subjectivity must be depicted as in a struggle, leaving visible traces, a successful involvement with, immersion in, the external world and others, and then a return to itself. All painting thus captures

a moment in a fundamental narrative that has a certain logic, and which must be understood to understand the unique availability of moments in such a narrative in painting. Not all painting is 'about' such religious love, but in so far as all painting has as its final object self-related subjectivity, all subject matters are all potentially or *an sich* the *full* realisation of such subjectivity, whether they depict Madonnas and child, or evoke the human tonality or attunement of a still life or landscape. Such potentialities are intimated in any art painting in its relation to the doubleness of human subjectivity.

This is all, of course, an abstract – perhaps insufferably abstract – account of the emotional power of painting. Let me close with a visual indication of its appropriateness. Consider Théodore Géricault's *Head of a White Horse*, 1816–1817, now hanging in the Louvre [Fig. 7.5]. I want to suggest that the painting immediately and vividly brings to life Hegel's dual claims about subjectivity and painting. What is so arresting about the painting is the incontrovertible subjectivity or deep interiority of the horse, '*literally visible*', even while mysterious, requiring interpretive work. There is something, even given the exoticism and strangeness of the horse, with those huge nostrils, and its odd, almost carefully combed mane, all at once accusatory, wise, hesitant, both wary and knowing, uncertain if facing friend or foe, not to mention simply noble, in a pose of great dignity, in the expression of the horse, as if facing and seeking the 'other' without which, for Hegel, it cannot be the subject it is, and unsure about finding such a realisation. (A common theme I have tried to show elsewhere, in Manet a generation later.)³¹ One easily imagines that the horse is looking at a human being, in an expression understandably wary, figuring not only species wariness but an omnipresent human wariness too. Seeing it this way (again, a way that can be missed if we take the painting as simply mimetic) is what it would be to understand the 'moment' as a moment in the struggle or narrative required by Hegel's account of a double subjectivity, here captured by the doubleness of the painting, showing the horse and intimating something not fully shown but still somehow visible. We see expressed, on the two-dimensional surface, the horse's subjectivity; its interiority is visible and, one has to say, 'felt', even as it remains to-be-found, present as not present; and, given that the horse is not only looking at a fictionalised viewer, but that

31 Pippin 2014.



7.5 Théodore Géricault, *Head of a White Horse*, c. 1815 (65.5 × 54.5 cm). Oil on canvas. Paris: Musée du Louvre, inv. RF544. © Erich Lessing / Art Resource, New York. Reproduced in colour as Plate 4.

the painting is directly facing (in Fried's sense)³² the beholder, it presents the same inner-out dynamic on the surface of the painting as such, the same dynamic, a visible intimation of 'inner' meaning – about animality, species relations, wildness, and domesticity, trust, fear, even pride – and all of this not conceptually or discursively, but in a way I have called, I hope following Hegel, affectively intelligible

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³² Fried 1998.

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T.J. CLARK

BEAUTY LACKS STRENGTH

Hegel and the art of his century

In the essay that follows I would like to ask the question: Is there an art – a nineteenth-century art – to which G.W.F. Hegel’s descriptions of world and consciousness apply? The descriptions I think most worth putting to the test – the particular passages in which the tug of war between actuality, negativity and Mind is stated in a way that I can imagine mattering to art (as opposed to art history) – are drawn largely from Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807).¹ For whatever the *Phenomenology*’s faults and peculiarities considered as a systematic exposition of philosophy, generations of readers have found it incomparable as a staging of philosophical drama; and perhaps because this is the book’s essential character – that is, because its whole tempo and texture depend on constant crescendo and diminuendo, a blaring of exultant trumpets followed by long agony in the lower strings – it seems as if art, in Hegel’s argument, is never far away.

When art appears explicitly in the *Phenomenology*, as it often does, it is almost unfailingly treated by Hegel in ways that are devastating, scandalous, astonishing, and – for all the aesthete’s obvious exclusions – still a challenge to our understanding of art’s purpose. Inevitably I have in mind here the book’s unforgettable pages on Greek tragedy and the pains of individuation; but, just as much, its chapter on the Unhappy Consciousness; and the return of an avatar of that consciousness, in the section on ‘The World of Self-Alienated Spirit’, disporting itself in full late-Enlightenment delight-in-despair – in particular, the pages that build toward the entrance of Rameau’s nephew, where music itself, seemingly

¹ Hegel 1977. All citations in what follows are to this edition. This essay sticks closely to its original lecture form: it is open-ended and episodic, as lectures are allowed to be – a sketch, especially in its final sections, of a picture I hope one day to complete.

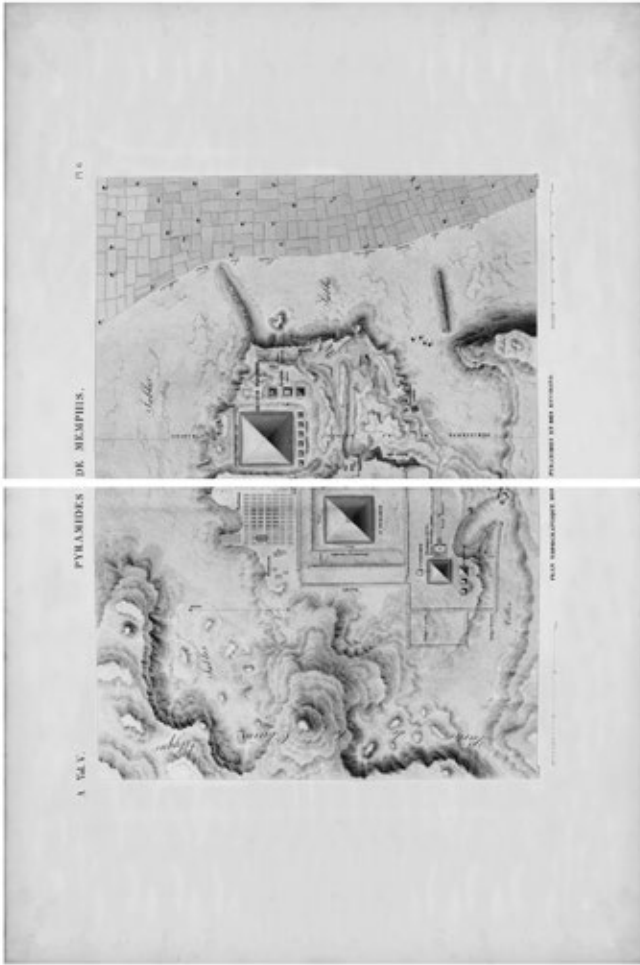
tearing apart its essential nature, gives voice to ‘the universal deception of itself and others; and the shamelessness which gives utterance to this deception is just for that reason the greatest truth’ (Hegel 1975, 317, § 522). From there I move on to the section late in the *Phenomenology* called ‘Religion in the Form of Art’, which dares to talk about the world of Spirit as it first objectified itself, long before *Antigone*; and my breath is taken away again by the section’s wild imaginative totalisations – especially the glimpses of Luxor, the sphinx, the pyramids.

Consider, then, a plate from the great *Description de l’Égypte*, published in Paris in 1809, just two years after the *Phenomenology* [Fig. 8.1]. Hegel, in the passage I quote below, seems already to have dreamt into verbal existence the *Description*’s bird’s-eye view of Memphis (1977, 421–422, § 692):

The crystals of pyramids and obelisks, simple combinations of straight lines with plane surfaces and equal proportions of parts, in which the incommensurability of the round is destroyed, these are the works of this artificer ... Thus either the works receive Spirit into them only as an alien, departed spirit that has forsaken its living saturation with reality and, being itself dead, takes up its abode in this lifeless crystal; or [*and here is the text’s truly uncanny moment, it seems to me, as Hegel pictures the pyramids in relation to the Nile sun*] they have an external relation to Spirit as something which is itself there externally and not as Spirit [to which the monuments are related] as to the dawning light, which casts its significance across them.

This passage is greater as an effort at comprehension, I feel, than even the famous page that follows on the transition, in the art of the ancient Near East, from geometry and inscribed ornament to organism and animal vitality [Fig. 8.2] (Hegel 1977, 427–428, § 706–707):

It is neither the crystal, the form characteristic of mere Understanding, which houses the dead or is illumined by a soul outside of it [*the pyramids again*], nor is it that blending of the forms of Nature and of thought which first emerged from the plant [*that is, the proliferating ornamental energy of Egyptian or Assyrian low relief*] ... On the contrary, the Notion now strips off the traces of root, branches, and leaves still adhering to its forms, and purifies the latter into shapes in which the crystal’s straight lines and flat surfaces are raised into incommensurable ratios ... The human form strips off the animal shape with



8.1 Plate from a volume of the *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–1829), showing the 'Pyramides de Memphis: Plan topographique des pyramides et des environs' (*Antiquity* vol. 5, published in 1809: *Description de l'Égypte: ou, Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française; Antiquités; Planches, plate 6*). Photograph by Michael Squire.

which it was blended; the animal is for the god merely an accidental guise; it steps alongside its true shape and no longer has any worth on its own account ... By this very fact, the shape of the god in its own self strips off also the poverty of the natural conditions of animal existence, and hints at the internal dispositions of animal life melted into its surface and belonging only to its surface.

As an attempt to understand the relation between the divine and the animal in Egyptian art, and above all to grasp the full meaning of Egyptian art's *stylisation* of the natural world – its melting of ‘the internal dispositions of animal life ... into its surface’ – this remains unrivaled. What it says about Egyptian religion may be wrong, even appallingly wrong. But this is because it sets itself the right kind of question – that posed by the difficulty of the objects addressed – to which a genuine answer is obliged to be recklessly hermeneutic.

When I read the *Phenomenology*, in other words, I am with Francis Bacon in believing that ‘truth emerges more readily from error than from confusion’ – or from art-historical sorting and labelling, which sets the real alienness of Form aside.²

I realise that in thus bringing on one or two of my favourite moments from the *Phenomenology*, I am inevitably touching on one of the present volume's main questions: namely, the place (the legitimacy) of Hegel's kind of speculative, totalising interpretation in art history. But the question I want to pursue from now on in this essay is somewhat different – connected, I think, but different. The question, to repeat, is whether the *Phenomenology*'s incomparable stagings of the drama of Mind and actuality, or of Mind and negativity, or of Mind and world, can be seen to have purchase on particular art objects – specifically, on the painting of Hegel's own day. I take ‘Hegel's own day’ to be an elastic category, certainly not bounded by his birth and death dates. For instance, I take it that the framework of Hegelian thinking – his model of consciousness and its objects, and his picture of history and temporality – persisted as a uniquely powerful matrix throughout the nineteenth century, so that figures as far away from Hegel in time as Friedrich Nietzsche, Stephane Mallarmé and Jacob Burckhardt (and I would say Marcel Proust and Wallace Stevens) are best understood as still struggling with his shade. Indeed, the last completed and most ruthless of the small array of pictures

² Spedding, Ellis and Heath 1869, 210 – cited in Kuhn 2012, 18.



8.2 Diorite statue of the lion-headed Egyptian goddess, Sekhmet; New Kingdom, Eighteenth Dynasty, c. 1388–1351 BC. Probably made in Thebes, but subsequently re-used at the temple of Mut at Karnak. Turin: Museo Egizio. © HIP / Art Resource, New York.



8.3 Henri Matisse, *Les tapis rouges*, 1906 (116 × 89 cm). Oil on canvas. Grenoble: Musée de Grenoble. Wikimedia Commons. Reproduced in colour as Plate 5b.

I shall invite you to think of in relation to the *Phenomenology* was done as late as 1906, very much in Proust and Mallarmé's world: it is Henri Matisse's *Les tapis rouges* [Fig. 8.3]. As an account of consciousness – or perception *as* consciousness – opening onto a world, Matisse's canvas has all of the *Phenomenology*'s vehemence. It is true to the bloodcurdling phrase in the *Lectures on the Fine Arts* – to 'the *extreme* that *thinking* is'.³ You will forgive me for toying with the fancy that the strange blue-green shawl in the Matisse, twisted and folded across the two carpets' red field – so irresistibly physiognomic, that fabric, with its final leonine profile even casting a shadow on the wall – might even be Hegel's ghost.

But is the extremism of the Matisse in pursuit of *Hegel's* extremism? Could it even be intended to put an end to the Hegelian drama? Those seem to me the questions.

3 Hegel 1975, 156.

We might begin to pose them by noting, in a preliminary way, that whatever else *Les tapis rouges* may be, it is certainly a kind of answer, aesthetically, to the famous passage in the *Phenomenology* about Beauty's fundamental lack of strength. Beauty lacks strength, says Hegel, above all in its dealings with the negative – the negative of Life, which is also the negative that is *in* Life, and that in some strong sense *is* Life itself, grasped in its painful Truth. Beauty is a circle that remains self-enclosed. It cannot face the dissolution that is Thought. But 'the circle that remains self-enclosed and ... holds its moments together [*fearing above all the reality of their difference, their opposition to one another*] is an immediate relationship, one therefore which has nothing astonishing about it' (Hegel 1977, 18–19, § 32):

But that an accident as such, detached from what circumscribes it ... should attain an existence of its own and a separate freedom – this is the tremendous power of the negative; it is the energy of thought, of the pure 'T'. Death, if that is what we want to call this non-actuality [*here is where my intuition of a ghostliness to Matisse's green shawl can come to strike me as more than fancy*] is of all things the most dreadful, and to hold fast what is dead requires the greatest strength. Lacking strength, Beauty hates the Understanding for asking of her what she cannot do. But the life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself.

I think I am obliged to say straight away, for clarity's sake – though this, in a sense, is to leap toward the conclusion of the line of thought I am developing – that Matisse's painting seems to me entirely susceptible to description in Hegel's terms, but also (and precisely *because*) its final picture of Beauty and deathliness and dismemberment is so deeply anti-Hegelian. Beauty's lack of strength, in other words, may be the key to its power – its willingness to have the world occur to it. It is just because Beauty is prepared not to 'find itself' – not to repeat a circle of self-loss and self-retrieval – that it is, for Matisse, so strong in its weakness. The Understanding in *Les tapis rouges* is swaddled – muffled – in its shawl or shroud, trying above all to be One, hanging on to the possibility of totalisation. But Beauty, says the painting, is anti-totality. It is the scatter of points and particles, the buzz of confetti across the black and red, and the *improbability* of all those particles' ending up being together – and

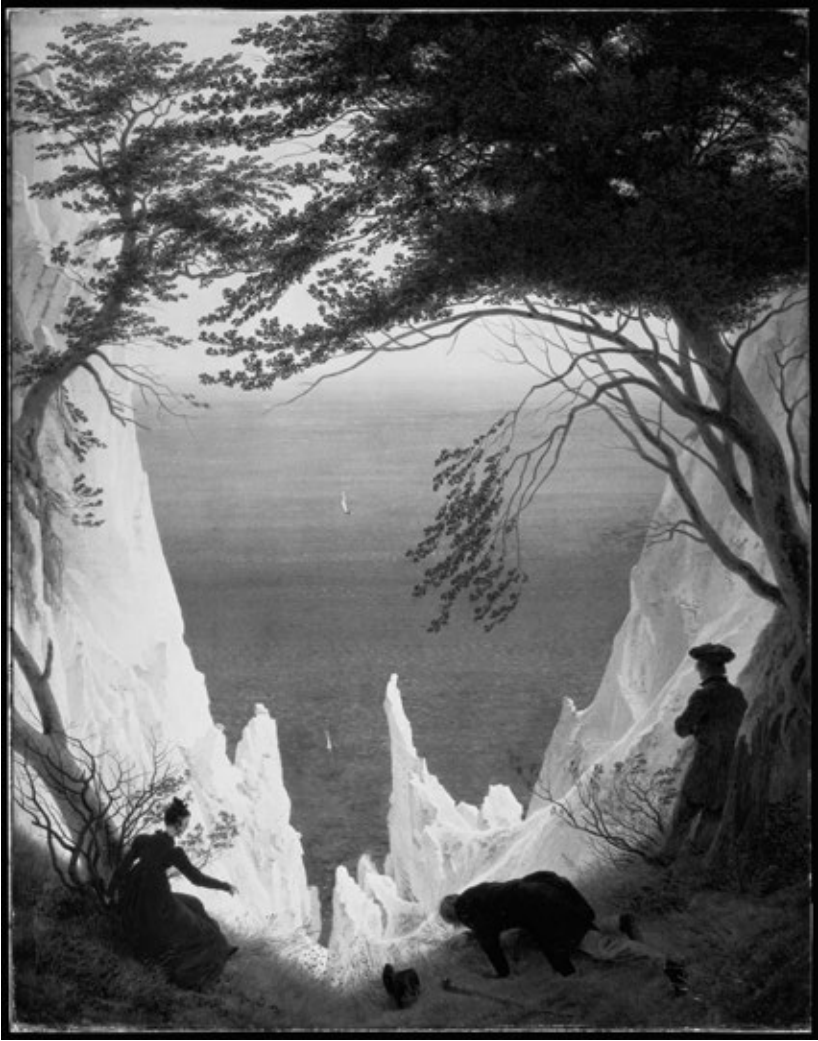
yet, look, they *are* together. It is Mind, says Matisse, that is ‘the circle that remains self-enclosed’ – the power that cannot resist the temptation to hold its moments together by some last trick of dialectic. Or rather, Mind as Hegel conceives it cannot. Mind as allowed *to happen in painting* – Mind as weakness, Mind as redness, Mind as particle storm – is a different matter.

The question I promised to pose in this essay was whether we have an art – a nineteenth- or early twentieth-century art – to which Hegel’s descriptions of world and consciousness can be seen to apply. I seem to be implying that they only apply, in the art I take seriously, in the negative – they are what painting is out to annihilate. But for Hegel’s view of things to be worth refuting in this way – with Matisse’s special vehemence – surely in the first place there must have been pictures that exemplified it strongly, beautifully. And yes, there were. My example is Caspar David Friedrich’s *Chalk Cliffs at Rügen*, painted in 1818 (so firmly in Hegel’s timeframe), and I ask you to look at it with the *Phenomenology* ringing in your ears [Fig. 8.4]. The passage I choose is from near the beginning of ‘The Certainty and Truth of Reason’. It is a typical Hegel paragraph, with even a touch of sunniness to it – we have, after all, just exited from the Unhappy Consciousness (1977, 139, § 232):

Now that self-consciousness [has become] Reason, its hitherto negative relation to otherness turns round into a positive relation. Up till now it has been concerned only with its independence and freedom, concerned to save and maintain itself for itself at the expense of the world, or of its own actuality, both of which appeared to it as the negative of its essence [*that is, as Thought*]. But as Reason, assured of itself, it is at peace with them, and can endure them; for it is certain that it is itself reality, or that everything actual is none other than itself; its thinking is itself directly actuality ...

And a few lines further on, famously – touching on the matter of permanence versus transience that was to become the lifeblood of French painting (1977, 140, § 232):

In thus apprehending itself, after losing the grave of its truth ... [Reason] discovers the world as *its* new real world, which in its permanence holds an interest for it which previously lay only in its transience [*remember that the Unhappy Consciousness had been alternately panicked and fascinated by what it saw as the utter ephemerality of*



8.4 Caspar David Friedrich, *Chalk Cliffs at Rügen*, 1818 (90.5 × 71 cm).
Oil on canvas. Winterthur: Museum Oskar Reinhart am Stadtgarten.
© bpk Bildagentur / Museum Oskar Reinhart am Stadtgarten,
Winterthur / Hermann Buresch (photographer) / Art Resource, New York.
Reproduced in colour as Plate 6.

the world passing by]; for the *existence* of the world becomes for self-consciousness its own *truth* and *presence*; it is certain of experiencing only itself therein.

This is very beautiful, even in English, and I am hoping that native speakers agree that for all its characteristic relentlessness it is also somehow delicate – or that its picture of world and consciousness is. Anyway, Friedrich makes it delicate. His picture of the colours of consciousness – the canvas’s pervasive white and pale blue – is touching, and I think entirely new. Permanence and transience, like the intelligible and the accidental in Matisse, are made into moments of one another. And Reason’s steps on the cliff path to Truth are tenderly, ironically rendered [Fig. 8.5]. The *Rückenfigur* looks out to totality straight away – for him infinity is a prospect, a spectacle, an image. But the man next to him with hat and staff wants the world to be closer – investigable, manipulable: he seems to be picking delicately at a flower or rare grass, or an insect in the grass; and he is naïve and absent-minded, far too near the edge of the cliff. Nothingness is always just on the other side of things. No wonder the woman reaches out to him with a movement of caution, or maybe instruction, her left hand firmly gripping a branch. The ‘moments’ of consciousness in the world – easy totality, slightly dangerous absorption, a ‘care’ directed inevitably to one’s fellow humans – are allowed their separate existence here. But they are all steps on the road to *non*-easy totality. The painting’s structure *is* that totality [Fig. 8.4]. Its sheltering circle of rocks and branches is the shape of the world – which in turn is the shape of the eye – which is, time and again in Romanticism, the shape of the ‘I’, the form that subjectivity ‘naturally’ takes. And again, circularity is not necessarily the same as self-enclosure: Hegel and Friedrich insist on that. The leafing and bifurcating of the great circle; the fractal logic of the branch lines and greenery and eroded chalk – these are what knowing is, and what makes a totality as opposed to an empty Beyond. The frame is the world and our knowledge of it. The frame is actualised in the figures on the edge of the cliff: their to-and-fro of kinds of looking is totality personified.⁴

Compare Georges-Pierre Seurat’s *Le Crotoy, Upstream* [Fig. 8.6]. Compare frame and world. The frame is *Mind* in the Seurat: the colours of the world are put there in the perspective of their ‘complementaries’, meaning

⁴ The precise nature of the figures’ responses to each other is uncertain, of course – Friedrich refrains from spelling out a plot. My reading of the interactions is not meant as definitive.



8.5 Detail of the same painting. © bpk Bildagentur / Museum Oskar Reinhart am Stadgarten, Winterthur / Hermann Buresch (photographer) / Art Resource, New York.

ultimately the blues of infinity and the solar yellow of total illumination. The frame is the Understanding; and yes, Beauty – the grass and clouds and the strange marooned townscape – lacks strength by comparison. Between frame and world there can only be a total, irreducible gap, for all the work of theory to reconcile them (and Seurat with one side of his sensibility half-believed in that reconciliation). The frame that is Mind cannot be disposed of or leapt beyond; but the painting tells us that it stands at an absolute distance from the world's occurrence. There will be no moment at which actuality 'returns' to Mind. The essential Hegelian proposition is being resisted: that is, the recognition that the world of otherness and pure event *is* Mind in its true actuality – is a '*becoming-other* that has to be taken back' (Hegel 1977, 11, § 20). Hegel, when he writes this phrase in the *Phenomenology*, italicises '*becoming-other*'. I would put the stress rather on the necessity implied in the argument: the fact that, for Hegel, the falling of Mind into the accidentalness and transience of experience *has to be taken back*. Compare the section on 'Beautiful Individuality' in *Lectures on Fine Art*. 'The soul too, as natural life, is a subjective but purely inner individuality, present in reality only implicitly, without knowing itself as a return into itself and by that means as inherently infinite ... Its manifestation achieves ... only a formal life – unrest, mutability, concupiscence, and the anxiety and fear incident to this dependent life ... The animation and life of *spirit* alone is free infinity ... because in its manifestation it reverts into itself and remains at home with itself.' And the lecturer, as so often, immediately repeats the point: 'To Mind alone ... is it given to impress the stamp of its own infinity and free return into itself upon its external manifestation, even though through this manifestation it is involved in restriction.'⁵

I think, to put it in a nutshell, that Seurat is out to resist the *return* here – the 'taking back' of the becoming-other. And in contrast to *Cliffs at Rügen*, there precisely cannot be any individuation, or figuration, of Mind in the world *within* – or infinitely far beyond – the frame. The bollard in the foreground of Seurat's *The Channel of Gravelines* makes the point almost comically [Fig. 8.7]: it is a parody of anchoring focalising consciousness, like the ghost or dwarf of a Friedrich *Rückenfigur*.

And in all this Seurat is profoundly the voice of French painting's enormous, relentless anti-Hegelianism. This is the point I shall make in conclusion. I want, by the way, to resist equating this anti-Hegelianism

⁵ Hegel 1975, 154–155.



8.6 Georges Pierre Seurat, *Le Crotoy, Upstream*, 1889 (70.5 × 86.7 cm). Oil on canvas. Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, inv. 70.183. © Detroit Institute of Arts, USA (Bequest of Robert H. Tannahill)/ Bridgeman Images. Reproduced in colour as Plate 7.

with a break, or even a watershed, in the art of the nineteenth century – the kind of break we often call ‘modernism’. No doubt it has proved immensely productive to think of Hegel’s account of art’s history, and in particular his thoughts on art’s ‘pastness’ for modern culture, in relation to a line of art that did eventually take pastness to be art’s tragic fate. But my sense of the century is different. More and more, I see French painting of the later nineteenth century as in continuity with the art of Hegel’s day (the art we call Romanticism) – in continuity with it just because it went on struggling with its legacy. I look at Seurat’s *Crotoy* [Fig. 8.6] and see it as framing a reply to J.M.W. Turner’s *Light and Colour* [Fig. 8.8] – very much still in Turner’s colour-theory terms, though determined to change Turner’s and Friedrich’s ocular circle into an implacable non-ocular square; just as I see *Les tapis rouges* [Fig. 8.3] as



8.7 Georges Pierre Seurat, *The Channel of Gravelines, Petit Fort Philippe*, 1890 (73.3 × 92.7 cm). Oil on canvas. Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art. Wikimedia Commons. Reproduced in colour as Plate 8.

an answer to Eugène Delacroix's *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* [Fig. 8.9]. An answer, I stress. What the interior of the Algerian women had meant to Delacroix – the interior as 'interiority,' as the hidden revealed, as the dream space of desire and self-certainty entered into at last – had no doubt to be subjected in the Matisse to the full power of the negative, so that the interior could become *otherness*. But the models of mind that had structured Turner's and Delacroix's world-picture are still determinant: the extremism of the answers to them in Matisse and Seurat only makes sense if the models, the Hegelian dramaturgy, persist in the culture as dominant. In other words, I see the ruthlessness – the vehemence – of French painting's late-century account of experience not so much as a leaping forward, out of the Hegelian habitus, into some kind of entirely *present* mere appearance of things – Seurat without the infinite frame, Matisse without the ghost in the winding-sheet – but as propelled by an interminable wrestling with a dead, but immortal, dialectic.



8.8 Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) - The Morning after the Deluge - Moses writing the Book of Genesis*, c. 1843 (78.5 × 78.5 cm). Oil on canvas. London: Tate Gallery, inv. No0532.
 © Tate, London / Art Resource, New York. Reproduced in colour as Plate 9.

The ruthlessness and vehemence can take many forms. Do not be deceived (as most of our serious guardians of taste still are) by the seeming weakness of Claude Monet's answer to Mind. Its lack of strength is entirely deliberate, and ironic, and unnerving. 'Lack of strength' is Beauty's best weapon against Totality. I am sure that Matisse and Seurat looked back on the nonchalant blandness of Monet's *La Gare Saint-Lazare: les signaux* [Fig. 8.10] and wondered why, in comparison, they were still trapped inside the 'unrest ... anxiety and fear' that Hegel had told them were qualities that went with simple sentience, mere 'natural life'. Matisse and Seurat's whole artistic effort was directed to



8.9 Eugene Delacroix, *The Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, 1834 (180 × 229 cm). Oil on canvas. Paris: Musée du Louvre, inv. 3824.
© Erich Lessing / Art Resource, New York.

escaping from that script of consciousness. But it was *hard*. How had Monet done it?

This essay will not attempt to work out, or work through, the particular moves and gambits that French painting adopted in its battle with Hegel; and of course it is the particularity of the moves and gambits that matter, and make French painting (to use Hegel's language) the 'world-historical' event it is. Without the negation of Hegel becoming 'manifest', and taking such obdurate outward form – the form of Seurat's frame, for instance, or of Matisse's warping and flattening of interiority – the negation would mean little or nothing. A fuller version of this argument, it follows, would have as its task the redescription of the distinctive features of French art in specifically anti-Hegelian terms.

Let me simply enumerate some of the main heads.

First, and pervasively, there is French art's pursuit of the instant, the instantaneous, conceived as an exit from Hegelian History – towards some new presence of Time, or towards a Time intercepted and replaced



8.10 Claude Monet, *La Gare Saint-Lazare: les signaux*, 1877 (65 × 81 cm). Oil on canvas. Hannover, Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum. © Erich Lessing / Art Resource, New York. Reproduced in colour as Plate 10a.

by an *hors temps*, or by some form of eternal recurrence, or by a pastness and presentness finally collapsed onto one another. Look at the signals in *La Gare Saint-Lazare* – clocks without hands, anti-timepieces [Fig. 8.10]. Remember the famous word ‘tarrying’ in the passage in the Preface to the *Phenomenology* on ‘tarrying with the negative’; and, equally a Hegel favourite, the word ‘lingering’ – ‘each moment is necessary, and ... each moment has to be *lingered* over, because each is itself a complete individual shape’ in world-history (Hegel 1977, 17, § 29). *No lingering* becomes French painting’s warcry.

Second, there is the long campaign of French art to rid representation of the clash, the polarisation, of optical opposites – of ‘moments’ in a dialectical drama. Instead of light versus dark, then, let there be narrow, almost imperceptible shifts of tone, fragile evenness and equality, all-overness, de-differentiation. A dim clearing in the woods as Camille Corot did it – look, for instance, at his *Rocks in the Forest of Fontainebleau* [Fig. 8.11] – not a path leading on, out of the half-light, into sunshine and shadow. An art



8.11 Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, *Rocks in the Forest of Fontainebleau*, c. 1860–1865 (46 × 59 cm). Oil on canvas. Washington: National Gallery of Art, inv. 1963.10.110. Wikimedia Commons. Reproduced in colour as Plate 10b.

without foreground and background, as in Paul Cézanne's *House in Provence* of c. 1885 [Fig 8.12]. An art – I recall here the great discussions of space in Cézanne that come down to us from Fritz Novotny – where everything in the world is made to exist in an uncanny middle distance, so that in some fundamental way it seems unrelated to 'us' (we viewers, we representatives of Mind).⁶ Not close to us, but not far away. *Disregarding us* – neither an 'outside' to the 'inside' of an onlooker, nor, in spite of its strangeness, the figure of a fictive or notional world that is only real in its *being-for-us*.

Third ... but here I stop the enumeration, for already you have an idea of its flight path.

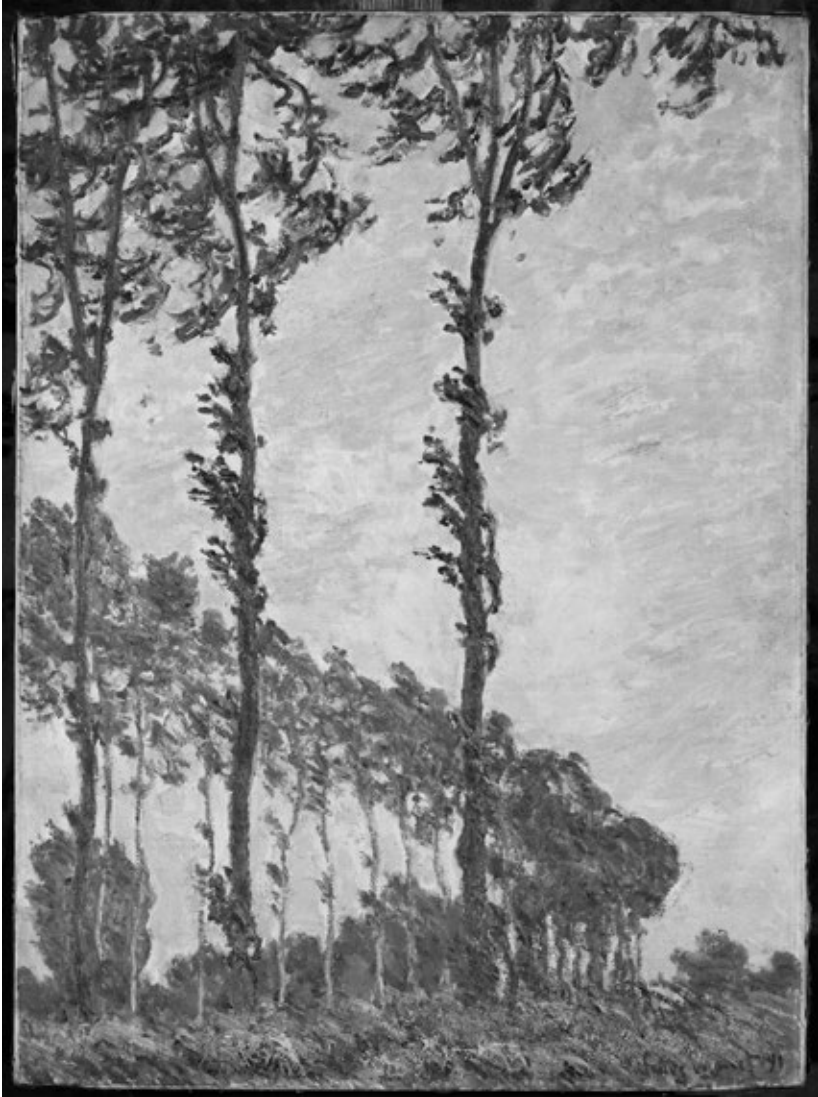
Let me instead try to pin down the various features' purpose. The 'instant', to start with that, is ultimately a metaphor in French art for the spot of time that has been wrested back from being a 'moment' in

⁶ Novotny 1938. Selections are translated in Wood 2000, 379–433.



8.12 Paul Cézanne, *House in Provence*, c. 1885 (65 × 81 cm). Oil on canvas. Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art, inv. 45.194. Wikimedia Commons. Reproduced in colour as Plate 11.

Hegel's sense, from being part of an unfolding *towards* truth. There is no 'toward-ness' in Seurat and Cézanne. The instant is outwardness, 'shining', dispersal, appearance, the un-teleological, the unmediated, the unreturnable-from – and all these terms are to be valorised, not seen as false fragments of a whole. Always in Hegel, of course, the word 'immediacy' comes with a qualification. 'Sensuous determinations', he says, 'have only powerless, abstract immediacy, or [mere] being as such' (Hegel 1977, 30–31, § 33). The Subject 'supersedes abstract immediacy ... the immediacy which barely is' (Hegel 1977, 30, § 32). An 'uncomprehended immediacy' is still, for Mind, something not real. Immediacy encourages 'passive indifference': *difference* and *activity* – 'the suffering and labor of the negative' – await (Hegel 1977, 28, § 30). But is not the point of French painting that all these insufficiencies end up being shown as sufficient – indeed, true? Incomprehension, indifference, abstract immediacy – those moments of Mind have to be given unanswerable aesthetic dignity, and thus 'magicked' (Hegel's word) into declaring themselves the new form



8.13 Claude Monet, *Poplars (Wind Effect)*, 1891 (100 × 74.5 cm). Oil on canvas. Paris: Musée d'Orsay, inv. RF2002-30. © RMN-Grand Palais (Photographer: Hervé Lewandowski) / Art Resource, New York. Reproduced in colour as Plate 12.



8.14 Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire from Les Lauves*, c. 1906 (60 × 73 cm). Oil on canvas. Moscow: Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, inv. 3339. © HIP / Art Resource, New York. Reproduced in colour as Plate 13.

of totality. Consider Monet's *Poplars (Wind Effect)* of 1891 [Fig. 8.13]. 'The immediacy which barely is', as Hegel calls it, is, in Monet, precisely what wins, in its very passivity, over the same paragraph's 'looking the negative in the face' (Hegel 1977, 19, § 32).

I return to Matisse and sum up [Fig. 8.3]. For Hegel, artistic reduction – say, in Matisse's case, the reduction of our complex orientation-towards-the-world to a play of pure colour – is always the manifestation of a work of Mind. Reduction 'withdraw(s)' the viewer from 'the profusion of details and accidents', from 'chance and externality' and puts in their stead 'pure appearance, produced by the spirit ... the marvel of ideality ... and an ironical attitude to what exists in nature and externally'.⁷ But Matisse is the least ironical of artists. He takes no distance from the world

⁷ I am quoting from the section on nature in Hegel 1975, 156, 155, 163.

he portrays – the very extremity of his displacements and substitutions, most notably of colour, throws us back into contact with the starting point, the apprehended. French painting, that is to say, stakes everything on a reduction that will register not as ‘mental’ but physical – an event, an occurrence, an ‘accident’ – a touch or a scatter, as of the Thing in Itself. ‘Only a formal life, unrest, mutability, concupiscence ...’ We go on struggling with the paradox that in Matisse ‘concupiscence’ becomes the true form of restraint. But all French painting thrives on the paradox.

And this is why we resist it. We are all Hegelians, aesthetically speaking. We cannot help but give the preference to the power of the negative, the temporal, the deathly. We compare a Monet *Poplars* [Fig. 8.13] to Cézanne’s *Mont Sainte-Victoire from Les Lauves* of 1906 [Fig. 8.14], and inevitably we warm – we sentimentalists of the negative – to the picture of becoming that seems to contain within it a darkness, a touch of devastation, a ‘dismemberment’. Monet’s mere moment unnerves us. His assembling of the world has an ominous superficiality to it, a tragic glib brightness, which goes on distracting and nonplussing.

But finally, Hegel can help us to understand the intensity – the aesthetic dignity – of an art dedicated to undoing his world-picture. For he is time and again monstrously good at giving form to exactly the visions of knowing that, in the end, he wishes us to leave behind, or to understand as partial, undialectical. Take the following passage from the Preface to the *Phenomenology* (Hegel 1977, 27, § 47):

Appearance is the arising and passing away that does not in itself arise and pass away, but is ‘in itself’, and constitutes the actuality and the movement of the life of truth ... Judged in the court of this movement, the single shapes of Spirit do not persist any more than determinate thoughts do, but they are as much positive and necessary moments, as they are negative and evanescent. In the whole of the movement, seen as a state of repose, what distinguishes itself therein, and gives itself particular existence, is preserved as something that *recollects* itself, whose existence is self-knowledge, and whose self-knowledge is just as immediately existence.

It is clear as we read these sentences in the Preface that the initial movements of consciousness Hegel describes here – the arising and passing away – are for him no more than a ‘moment’ of comprehension, with always the true shape of Spirit calling them on. But the movements themselves are spellbinding – their actuality lives on the page. The sentences

are beautiful. We could easily tarry with them. We could, as I think the French did, make them the motto of a whole line of art.

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PAUL A. KOTTMAN

HEGEL AND SHAKESPEARE ON THE PASTNESS OF ART

*The charm dissolves apace;
And as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason.*

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (1611) V.i.64–68¹

What if the first to notice that ‘art ... is and remains a thing of the past’ were not G.W.F. Hegel – the philosopher to whom those words famously belong – but rather an artist, namely William Shakespeare? And what if the first person to notice that Shakespeare had been the first to recognise art’s abiding pastness were none other than Hegel himself?

Questions of ‘firstness’ to one side, and more to the point, what if Shakespeare and Hegel were *right* about art’s pastness? What, then, would they help us to understand?

This essay is devoted to exploring these hypotheses. My aim, in other words, will not be merely to prove these hypotheses to be correct – since even if they were accepted, we would still have to figure out their significance. My aim, rather, will be to show how these hypotheses might illuminate the meaning of the claim about art’s pastness.

Hegel’s interest in Shakespeare is evident from the very earliest writings of his to have come down to us, right through to his mature Berlin *Lectures on Fine Art* in the 1820s (hereafter Hegel, 1975).² Already in Hegel’s

¹ I take all citations from the edition of Shakespeare 1992.

² By ‘earliest writings’, I mean not only the gripping remarks on the ‘causality of fate’ in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* – found in Hegel’s early text on ‘The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate’ (as that piece is now called). There is also

lectures of 1823, 1826 and again in the lectures of 1828–1829, Hegel claimed that ‘art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past [...*ist und bleibt die Kunst ... für uns ein Vergangenes*]’ (Hegel 1975, 11).³ And in what might be called the epilogue to those lectures – which (in 1823, at least) included the repetition of the claim about art’s pastness, and (in the later lectures) named Shakespeare in culmination – Hegel addressed his audience directly (Hegel 2014, 439; Hegel 1975, 1236–1237):⁴

Now we have covered the range of art. For us, art in its seriousness is something bygone ...

the earliest text of Hegel’s to have come down to us – Hegel’s own rewriting of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, composed when Hegel was around fifteen years old. Hegel 2002, X: 3–4. In his biography of Hegel, Terry Pinkard recounts that: ‘One of [Hegel’s] teachers, a Mr. Loeffler, gave him at the age of eight a present of Shakespeare’s works translated by Eschenberg, with the advice that although he would not understand them at that point, he would soon learn to understand them. (Hegel recorded years later in his teenage diary a laudatory remembrance of Loeffler when he died).’ Pinkard further claims that Hegel read some Shakespeare in English: ‘[Hegel] took great interest in the offerings in the various theaters in Paris. He was even able to see the great English actor Charles Kemble, and the legendary Irish actress Henrietta Smithson, perform Shakespeare at the newly opened English Theater in Paris; he followed the plays by reading along in the English editions he had procured ...’ Pinkard 2000, 5, 551–552. For more on the claim that Hegel read Shakespeare in English, see Jennifer Bates 2007, 20.

3 And: ‘... *ihre Form hat aufgehört, das höchste Bedürfnis des Geistes zu sein*’ (Hegel 1969, XIII: 25 and 142). For intellectual-historical context, see Danto 2004, 535–540 – though I disagree with Danto’s chronology (moreover, I disagree that the issue is finally chronological). See also the discussion in Davies 2007, 120, and passim; and also Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert’s prefatory discussion in Hegel 2014, 34, and passim.

4 The authenticity of Hegel’s *Lectures on Fine Art* – based on lecture notes from the last three of these lecture courses – is not an issue I can take up here. Still, it seems worth saying that Hegel’s *Lectures* are roughly as much ‘Hegel’s’ as the sources on which critical editions of Shakespeare’s *Tempest* are ‘Shakespeare’s’. (Just as Hegel’s *Lectures* were published several years after his death, so too the first edition of *The Tempest* appeared in the First Folio of 1623, seven years after Shakespeare’s death.) For a recent assessment of the textual issues in Hegel, see Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert’s introduction to Hegel 2014; also, the discussion in Speight 2014.

Now, with the development of the kinds of comedy we have reached the real end of our philosophical inquiry ... My one aim [throughout these lectures] has been to seize in thought and prove the fundamental nature of the beautiful and art, and to follow it through all the stages it has gone through in the course of its realization. I hope that in this chief point my exposition has satisfied you. And now when the link forged between us generally and in relation to our common aim has been broken, it is my final wish that the higher and indestructible bond of the Idea of beauty and truth may link us and keep us firmly united now and for ever.

At the close of his 2014 book, *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism*, Robert Pippin suggests that Hegel's valediction is 'meant to call to mind Prospero's farewell to *his arts* ... at the end of *The Tempest*'.⁵

*Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own ...
... Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant ...
(Shakespeare, *The Tempest* Epilogue)*

Entertaining Pippin's suggestion that these passages should be read together, I want to discuss what these two 'epilogues' reveal, not only about what Hegel teaches us about Shakespeare, but also about how Shakespeare's late work already acknowledges art's 'bygone-ness' or 'pastness'. I will also try to do this by discussing Pippin's treatment of Hegel's claim in *After the Beautiful*, raising some questions about Pippin's treatment of Hegel's claim to make room for my own interpretation.

For the sake of motivating my discussion of Hegel and *The Tempest*, allow me first to make a few observations about Hegel's remarks on Shakespeare, both at the end of the *Lectures on Fine Art*, and more generally. Second, I will discuss Hegel's claim about art's pastness, and offer my response to Pippin's treatment of it. Third, I will offer some remarks

⁵ The two 'epilogues' have been compared before; I ask the reader to entertain the plausibility of the comparison. See Pippin 2014, 142–143, and Trüstedt 2011, 65. I have made two earlier – and, to me, still unsatisfactory – attempts to discuss Prospero's speech, in light of Hegel's *Lectures*, in Kottman 2014 and in Kottman 2017a. The present essay thus represents my third attempt.

about *The Tempest*, in the hope of making available for further discussion aspects of Shakespeare's presentation of these issues.

I.

At perhaps the simplest level of interpretation, anyone who has even taken part in a university lecture course will recognise what Hegel is trying to accomplish with his parting words: he is hoping for applause. Hegel's plea ('I hope ... my exposition has satisfied you') is every bit as transparent as Prospero's ('... release me from my bands / With the help of your good hands / ... or else my project fails, which was to please'). Lest we mistake this appeal for narcissistic neediness, however, we should note that neither Hegel nor Prospero is asking for an appreciation of who they are as individuals; nor are they merely soliciting an acknowledgment of their role in this context (professor, philosopher, actor, artist).⁶ Instead, both Hegel and Prospero (Shakespeare) seek a different kind of acknowledgment. First, there would be the shared acknowledgment that a concluding stage of a collective activity – a theatrical drama, a lecture course – had been reached in a provisionally 'satisfying' way. The applause they solicit, in other words, would test whether *that* kind of acknowledgment has been earned. So, both appeals would also be subject to the kinds of failures and rejections that can attend human efforts of becoming answerable to one another's acts and efforts.

While such an appeal could easily be nothing more than a cloying attempt to coerce an audience, or could unfold as a kind of empty social ritual or 'show' (as in those occasions where one feels 'obliged' to applaud), I see both Hegel's and Prospero's valedictory appeals as problematising such rituals. For one thing, given the novelty of what has just unfolded – namely: Hegel's lectures, Shakespeare's play – these appeals amount to an *interrogation* of their public: 'Well, what do you all think?'

Put differently, both valedictories express an underlying presumption about a collectively shareable evaluation – a presumption, that is, about the relationship between performer and audience that allows for such a

⁶ An interpretive tradition that seems to have begun with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Goethe (in the very years in which Hegel was lecturing in Berlin and meeting regularly with Goethe) conflates Prospero and Shakespeare. Coleridge called Prospero 'the very Shakespeare himself, as it were, of the tempest'. See Coleridge 1987, II: 269.

collective experience (a dramatic play, a lecture course) to be meaningfully 'shared'. This presumption is a feature of all dramatic art (and all university lectures), insofar as these must satisfy the minimal requirements for performative intelligibility in some time and place: a 'common enough' vernacular. But here Hegel and Shakespeare (Prospero) also plead for *understanding*, for 'indulgence' (Prospero), for 'unity' in the wake of a broken 'link forged between us generally and in relation to our common aim' (Hegel) – at the same time pointing toward an undetermined 'future' form of mutual understanding. So, their appeal is at least as much an aspiration as it is a presumption about shared conditions.

Second, both epilogues aim to demonstrably reflect – rather than merely assert, or describe – provisional conclusions to historical activities (art and philosophical 'science', respectively) that are attempts to render these practices intelligible from within.⁷ To bring an activity – like drama, or teaching – to a collectively acknowledged *conclusion* 'as part of' its own doing, rather than consequent to some external interruption or end, is to test the self-determination of the practice itself, to assess the success or failure of any shared answerability for its results. Not only is this part of the aspirational dimension of the appeals, in the sense just mentioned, but it is also crucial to what Hegel calls his 'science of art', that fine art be understood to draw the line between itself and whatever falls outside it, that fine art be internally self-limiting.

Such self-limitation is also a possibility that belongs uniquely to the 'temporal' or performing arts that Hegel places at the culmination of his discussion of romantic art: music and dramatic poetry. It is true that one can stop or 'quit' painting or sculpture – an individual can quit painting, make the last stroke with a brush; a culture can also stop making paintings. But the practice of the plastic arts themselves lack the means to achieve their *own* conclusion from within the temporal unfolding of act or practice itself; whereas the 'end' of music or drama can belong to its own activity (hence, Hegel thought, painting 'pass[es] over into the sphere of music'). Hegel does not mention Aristotle in the context of his discussion of the differences between the plastic and the performing arts; but because Hegel often has Aristotle in mind, I think it is licit to evoke Aristotle's treatment of this issue here. According to Aristotle, in the case of praxis, potentiality (*dynamis*) is *internal* to actuality (*energeia*) – which

⁷ By this, I mean what Hegel describes in terms of the standpoint of reason (*Vernunft*) as distinct from what he calls the understanding (*Verstand*).

means that actions have their 'end' in the activity itself.⁸ By contrast, in the case of movement (of which *poiēsis* is a subset) actuality is *external* to potentiality, and is defined by its relation to an end (*telos*) at which it terminates, an end that is external to the motion itself, which means that the motion itself (the activity inherent in the plastic arts) is incomplete (*atelēs*). And it is worth noting that Aristotle distinguishes between the performing arts (*mousikē*) and the plastic arts in this context, contrasting flute-playing to *poiēsis*.⁹ Still – if, for Aristotle, the act of plastic fabrication is incomplete, for Hegel it is the historical practice of the plastic arts, which, over time, passes over to the romantic arts of music and poetry for its completion.

Third, there is a propinquity of practical substance – not only of form or rhetoric – between the 'epilogues' of Hegel's *Lectures* and Shakespeare's *Tempest*.¹⁰ That is, Hegel here *does* something with Shakespeare that he does with no other artist that he mentions in the course of the Aesthetics lectures: Hegel imitates Prospero, by which I mean he displays a logical and practical affinity between his own activity (lecturing, offering a 'science' of the history of art) and Prospero's Epilogue – in 'enacted' form as well as verbal content. As Pippin puts it (2014, 142), Hegel's speech is 'much like' Prospero's. Indeed, Hegel likens his own lectures to Shakespeare's drama at, arguably, *that drama's* own most self-reflexive moment: Prospero's Epilogue so often having been heard as Shakespeare's valedictory reflection on his own artistic career.¹¹ Moreover, Hegel imi-

⁸ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1050a35–1050b1.

⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1050a30–35: '... in some [sciences] the end and the activity are the same, and there is not any other end beyond the activity; for instance, to the flute player the activity and the end are the same (for to play the flute is both his end and his activity); but not to the art of housebuilding (for it has a different end beyond the activity) ...', Aristotle, *Magna Moralia* 1211b27. Similarly, Aristotle writes: 'for one cannot in the same moment both be taking a walk and have taken it, nor be house-building and have house-built'. Incidentally, the example of 'house-building' also makes clear that *poiēsis* is, in general, a subspecies of *kinēsis*; see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1048b18–35.

¹⁰ Of course, Hegel's echo of Shakespeare could be taken as nothing more than a means to summarise his main points, or as a way to show his love of Shakespeare – or, Hegel could just be ending with a 'citation' the way many orators do. But I am not convinced that these 'rhetorical' strategies explain what Hegel is doing here. There is, I think, a logical as well as a rhetorical affinity.

¹¹ That Shakespeare's *Tempest* was already being read as an allegory for Shakespeare's reflection on his own artistic practice is evidenced in Goethe's

tates Shakespeare in the act of concluding a series of lectures that he holds up as ‘doing’ distinctly *wissenschaftliche* work – as if insisting on the necessity of such imitation for a reflective, philosophical attention to the course of art’s ‘realisation’ (*Realisation*). And this seems connected to a core ambition of Hegel’s lectures: namely, to demonstrate (rather than merely report or describe) the emergence of modern/romantic art out of classical and symbolic art. For romantic art’s emergence and end to be ‘scientifically’ demonstrated, it must also have been somehow internally achievable (and, in that sense, *re-enactable* as well as teachable) in something like a dramatic education from the point of view of historical subjects (us, Prospero’s audience, Hegel’s students).¹² At least, this is how I read remarks like: ‘For this reason my treatment of the subject could not consist in a mere criticism of works of art or an instruction for producing them’, or ‘My one aim has been to seize in thought and to prove the fundamental nature of the beautiful and art, and to follow it through all the stages it has gone through in the course of its realization’ (Hegel 1975 1237). As I will suggest later, something like this ‘re-enacted course’ is staged in *The Tempest*, too.

Related to this, Hegel imitates (or re-enacts) Prospero even as he explicitly disavows further analytical discussion or detailed exegesis of Shakespeare’s text. Immediately before pronouncing the Epilogue cited at length above, Hegel had claimed that ‘the modern world has developed a type of comedy which is truly comical and truly poetic’, before elliptically adding – as the very last sentence of the entire lecture course, just before the Epilogue: ‘As a brilliant example of this sort of thing, I will name Shakespeare once again, in conclusion, but without *going into detail*’ (Hegel 1975, 1236, my emphasis). Of course, students of Hegel’s *Aesthetics* – 1237 pages in its English translation – must have laughed at that last remark. After all, Hegel saw no reason not to ‘go into detail’ with respect to other art works and practices. He treats his students to lengthy and intricate discussions of Doric and Ionic columns, obelisks, the Memnon statues, for instance, and to long discussions of anatomical details in

re-elaboration of *The Tempest* in *Faust II*, which was being composed in the years that Hegel was lecturing on art in Berlin (and meeting fairly regularly with Goethe). For a recent assessment, see Lee 2012, 198–210.

¹² Recall Josiah Royce’s famous suggestion that Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is a *Bildungsroman*, or Hegel’s own frequent characterisations of his enterprise as the self-education of consciousness. See Royce 1919, 147–150.

classical Greek sculpture.¹³ And yet, Hegel does not ‘cite’ Shakespeare here, the way he – on the previous page! – had cited Molière’s *Tartuffe*; or, the way he had quoted from Shakespeare earlier in the lectures, when he wanted to praise Shakespeare’s skill at portraying his character’s capacity for self-distancing; or, the way he cites (in altered form) Schiller’s poem ‘Freundschaft’ at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*; or, even the way he obliquely refers to Sophocles’ *Antigone* in his discussion of Greek *Sittlichkeit* in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.¹⁴ In the Epilogues under consideration we seem to have moved from citation (even oblique citation) into – I am suggesting – something closer to practical imitation or ‘dramatic-philosophical education,’ rather than art criticism. As if the self-limitation of art tumbled into the doing of the science of art.

I would also like to register one impression I have of Hegel’s *Lectures* overall, in this respect: Hegel seems to have thought that different historical stages of arts (symbolic, classical, romantic – as well as the different arts themselves) call for different *kinds* of insightful-critical accounts, not just for different judgments or criticisms. Some artworks call for scrutinising observations, attention to detail, while others call for something else, depending, in part at least, on our cultural-historical propinquity to them, on what we ‘owe’ them for our self-understanding. For example, in the case of Shakespeare, I take it, Hegel thought Shakespeare’s achievement

13 The discussions are not as long as those found in, say, Winckelmann’s *History of Ancient Art*, but they are nonetheless striking for their attention to detail.

14 The last artist to be cited in the 1823 Hotho transcripts is Aristophanes, though the discussion of ‘comedy’ in those transcripts looks much like the discussion of Shakespeare at the close of the Knox translation. Hegel quotes a German translation of Shakespeare in a section of the *Lectures on Fine Art* called ‘Symbolism of the Comparative Art-Form’. But there, Hegel seems to have been most interested in evidencing the way in which Shakespeare’s language reveals the achievement of a kind of self-reflection, or self-distancing from the immediacy of passionate feeling – ‘the freedom’ to present one’s own ‘fate to oneself in an image’ (Hegel 1975, 418–420). As Pippin has observed, Hegel’s citations of ‘literary texts’ (Schiller’s ‘Freundschaft’ is Pippin’s main focus, in part because Hegel alters the citation of Schiller) can be taken to serve an appropriately double purpose: ‘... the *citation* gives evidence for the indispensability of the living, aesthetic dimension of experience for any philosophical account of norms ... and the *alteration* ... gives evidence that the completion and *Aufhebung* of aesthetic representation by philosophical reflection is just as indispensable’ (Pippin 2011, 119).

could not be aptly understood just through an apprehension of formal characteristics or details of the plays – although that sort of apprehension might be sufficient for a scientific analysis of Doric columns, say. Rather, Shakespeare requires a different kind of account – something approaching what I am calling his philosophical ‘imitation’ of Shakespeare. As if the aims of Shakespeare’s drama and Hegel’s philosophy of art were nearly identical at this moment (or, at least, mutually illuminated by being identified, by Hegel, with one another). By the same token, Hegel seems to regard the standpoint achieved in his lectures as a viewpoint in whose very achievement Shakespeare’s art itself plays a crucial role:¹⁵ ‘The *philosophy* of art is a greater need in our day than it was in the days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is’ (Hegel 1975, 11, my emphasis). Or, as Hegel puts it near the end of his *Science of Logic*, ‘Philosophy has the same content and the same end as art’ (cited and discussed in Pippin 2014, 6–7).

Last, but not least, we should not forget the pride of place, as it were, that Hegel assigns to Shakespeare in the *Lectures*. Shakespeare is the last artist named at the very end of the *Lectures*, concluding the section on dramatic poetry, as if Shakespearean drama – and *The Tempest* in

15 The principle of subjectivity or a character’s inner life, for instance, is not just a philosophical principle or social reality that is nicely illustrated, exemplified or expressed in the work of Shakespeare. Rather, for Hegel, it is one of the achievements of Shakespearean drama to have helped bring subjectivity to life – to have ‘enlivened’ our inner lives in ways that are intertwined with, but not reducible to, how ‘the right of subjectivity’ emerged historically in religious practices (like the veneration of the saints, and increased attention to the story of Christ-the-man) or political history (the way intimate aspects of domestic-family members’ lives started to count as properly political concerns). Benjamin Rutter says this well when he notes that, for Hegel, ‘art is not a match for the culture, a mirror in the road, but the matrix for its self-understanding as a coherent form of life’ (Rutter 2010, 2). Hegel makes this point in the very same passage. He notes that in ‘the religious sphere’ and ‘the political sphere’ the ‘interests of individuals’ are less and less ‘absorbed’ by the ‘substantial elements’ of family, church, state – but that dramatic-poetic-artistic works establish ‘the right of subjectivity’ as ‘the sole subject-matter’ in a way that is not reducible to the increasing privileging of subjectivity in, say, the objective political arena. Shakespeare, in short, can show us what subjectivity *is* or *can be* in ways that political history or religious traditions on their own cannot. See Hegel 1975, 1223–1224.

particular – were the conclusion of the history of art’s highest vocation in Hegel’s telling.

In part, Hegel saw dramatic poetry as ‘the highest stage of art and poetry generally’ because ‘in contrast to the other perceptible materials, stone, wood, colour and notes, speech alone is the element worthy of the expression of spirit’. And reading the opening of the section ‘Dramatic Poetry’ in the *Lectures*, it can *seem* that, for Hegel, dramatic poetry is ‘freer’ than the other arts because its *medium* – namely, speech and action – is from the start ‘spiritual’, human, de-naturalised.¹⁶ But before we prematurely conclude that Hegel and Shakespeare meant to leave art’s sensuousness behind with dramatic poetry, we should recall the importance both place on theatrical representation. ‘Drama’, Hegel writes, ‘imperatively needs a sensuous presentation, and this can only be given artistically by actual performance in the theater’ (Hegel 1975, 1192).¹⁷

And we should consider other aspects of Hegel’s discussion of dramatic poetry, too. Drama might be also said to be ‘freer’ than the other arts when it comes to choosing its content: since its ‘medium’ or ‘form’ is human speech and action, it can comprehend the entire realm of the ‘doable’ (actual and possible) in human affairs.¹⁸ Indeed, not only does Hegel rank dramatic poetry as the ‘highest stage’ of art; he also thought that among modern dramatists, ‘you will scarcely find any ... who can be compared with Shakespeare’ (Hegel 1975, 1228). But in saying this, Hegel is, I think, not simply advancing a historical or ontological hierarchy of artistic media in which the medium of dramatic poetry just is (or turns out to be) freer, because de-materialised. Rather, Hegel also seems interested in the way in which the historical achievement of certain kinds of dramatic poetry assess – somehow account for – art’s own becoming

16 Prospero’s ‘art’, too, *seems* to function as an allegorical presentation of art’s denial of nature’s power to tell us what to do with natural elements. Think, for instance, of Prospero’s powers to conjure up storms, ‘negate’ nature, call forth the dead etc.

17 English translation modified. The German refers to ‘... *einer vollständig sinnlichen Darstellung, welche sie kunstgemäß erst durch die wirkliche theatralische Exekution erhält*’.

18 As in Aristotle’s suggestion that tragedy is more universal than history, because it can portray potential as well as actual events. For Hegel, too, dramatic poetry could only (that is, historically could only) present and develop a ‘complete and specific action’ by means of theatrical-sensuous representation – that is, by becoming something other than epic or narrative or lyric. See Kottman 2014 and Kottman 2016, 6–10.

history through a reflective account of art's past-ness.¹⁹ Drama can *contain* music without being reducible to a musical performance, can *contain* spectacles and images of all sorts without being thereby reducible to the plastic arts. Moreover, drama can purposefully *show* this containment of other media as essential to its *own* specifically expressive power. Which is, of course, also what Prospero demonstrates in those scenes of self-conscious 'theatricality' the first scene of the fourth act. Put another way, late romantic dramatic poetry – unlike the other arts Hegel treats – turns out to have no 'ideal content'.²⁰ Modern drama is, in this sense, better positioned than music or painting to embody art's becoming past, because it is the only art in which the limitations of these other arts are internally and explicitly registered *by* (dramatic) art.

All this is perhaps best grasped with Shakespeare in mind.

Art's highest vocation, it seems reasonable to think, is that to which Prospero had once aspired – 'rapt in secret studies' and 'neglecting all worldly ends' (*Tempest* I.ii.76, 89) – before being taught by fraternal betrayal, political upheaval and historical reflection that the vocation itself was no longer viable. One obvious image for art's social non-viability being the exile of the artist to an island on which 'art' can continue indefinitely, with supreme technical mastery (see *Tempest* IV.i), but bereft of its highest vocation.

By finally abjuring rough magic, breaking his staff and drowning his books, Prospero is not himself severing art from its highest vocation. Rather, by drowning his instruments and techniques, he is at last acknowledging that art has already been separated from its highest vocation. In this way, art's loss of vocation is internally registered *by* artistic means

19 This feature of drama helps us see why the 'historical' (symbolic-classical-romantic) and the 'generic' (Architecture-Sculpture-Painting-Music-Poetry) developmental structures do not and cannot be brought into alignment by any external 'structure' in Hegel's account: only when the historical and generic-developmental sequences are shown to have their apotheosis *in* an artwork's historical achievement (I nominate Shakespeare for this status) can the development of art be seen as *both* historical *and* generic – chronology, social history and medium-specific analysis cannot, on their own, bring this into view. In his book, *Tragic Play: Irony and Theater from Sophocles to Beckett*, Christoph Menke suggests that already Greek drama 'for Hegel is on its way to a "no longer beautiful art" ... In drama begins the end of art, *within* art' (Menke 2009, xxx). I agree with Menke's suggestion, but think it needs to be followed through to modern drama as the site of art's becoming past (not just 'on its way').

20 I try to elaborate on this in Kottman 2016.

as Prospero's 'project' (as he calls it) – in Shakespeare's play, in Prospero's 'final' display of art's technical prowess – *and* by Prospero's sealing the fate of the 'object-remains' of art: breaking his staff, drowning his books. Prospero, that is, aims to defend against art's ahistoricity by destroying art's (now) merely technical-instrumental means – so as not to let the possibility of art-making persist indefinitely, as refined technical craft, in ways that might blind us to the obsolescence of its highest vocation.²¹

Not only that. To bear witness to art's abiding pastness – by warding off art's indefinite continuance as consummately perfectible skill, in ways that threaten to obscure the pastness of art's highest vocation – Prospero also sees to it that the material object-remains of his art not be left adrift, or in circulation, to suffer whatever fate the winds of history might bring. In other words, not only does Prospero defend against art's ahistoricity by destroying art's (now) merely technical-instrumental means; he also defends against a future for art-objects in which they can circulate as nothing more than material sufferers of historical fate – valued chiefly as collectables that bear the scars of their historical provenance, like the books in the library unpacked by Walter Benjamin (Benjamin 1969). Prospero does this not by incinerating his tools of art-power (as Caliban wanted to do) but by consigning his staff and book to the elements, where they will lose their identifiable markings, without however losing their sensuous objecthood. To acknowledge that art's fate has been irrevocably sealed, Prospero seals the fate of art's object-remains, too, returning them to whence they came – 'certain fathoms in the earth ... deeper than did ever plummet sound' (5.1.55–56).

And lest we miss the significance of this, Shakespeare emphasises that Prospero's staff and books – drowned and buried – will not one day reappear, like the ruins of Pompeii where, as Freud pointed out, 'their burial had been their preservation'.²² Prospero's staff and books persist of course – I am writing about them now, and have seen them drowned on stage and film many times – but they do not persist as ruins. They are neither the immortal material bearers of tradition, as ancient fantasies about sculpture and architecture once held, nor are they the endlessly dying 'aura-less' relics which happened to survive the loss of that tradition

21 Hegel points to this same distinction: 'We may well hope that art will always rise higher and come to perfection, but the form of art has ceased to be the supreme need of spirit' (Hegel 1975, 103).

22 Freud 1953–1974, X: 176.

– like the Roman antiquities Freud stored in his Biedermeier cabinet.²³ Instead of trying to ensure that his book and staff survive in exile, art-objects adrift, Shakespeare – who made no efforts, so far as we know, to ensure that his written plays would survive his death – rescues the object-reminders of art’s pastness by folding Prospero’s objects *into* the waves of history. The material objects of Prospero’s ‘art’ will not live forever, but neither will they die forever as exiled relics. If anything, Shakespeare leads us to see, these objects might be unrecognisably transformed by their loss at sea and perhaps become material bearers of post-artistic value: new treasures, not necessarily connected, recognisably, to the history of art. They ‘... suffer a sea-change / into something rich and strange’ (I.ii.403–4). Isn’t Shakespeare’s canonization itself one such sea-change? Like the modern humanities, which ‘study’ all kinds of cultural products washed ashore by the waves of history ...?

For Hegel, too, art proper undergoes a ‘dissolution’ [*Auflösung*] that is followed by something more irrevocable: late romantic art’s ‘collapse’ [*Zerfallenheit*]. And Prospero’s Epilogue, like Hegel’s description in the operative passage, ‘passes over to the presentation of common reality as such’ (Hegel 1975, 576) – though this is a ‘common reality’ that does not fully appear within the horizon of art-making. This reality, Shakespeare seems to suggest, emerges as a ‘rich and strange’ reality, one whose emergence is predicated upon something both older and younger than art: metamorphosis. More on this below.

II.

In order for Hegel’s claim about art’s loss of vocation to have been earned according to the ‘scientific’ standards that Hegel sets for himself in the Introduction to the *Lectures*, art’s becoming past would have to be *part* of the realised development of art that Hegel himself unfolds. Hegel cannot attribute art’s bygoneness to something entirely *external* to art’s own historical development. He can only declare art ‘a thing of the past’ if art’s becoming past is in some way also *artistically* registered, hence ‘scientifically’ earned, within the historical development of art that Hegel considers himself to have presented.

²³ So, the fate of Prospero’s books and staff might also form the basis of a rejoinder to Horowitz’s conclusions about the fate of art, as in his reading of Freud. See Horowitz 2001, 131–132.

In the secondary literature, it is widely assumed that Hegel meant to identify the late romantic art of his own day as the moment when art's loss of vocation was becoming artistically manifest.²⁴ But this runs contrary to Hegel's own assessment.²⁵ Nevertheless, to my knowledge, no commentator has suggested that we look back to Shakespeare to better understand Hegel's thesis about art's pastness. Why not? Might this have something to do with our desire to see Shakespeare's art as immortal, with our own philosophical Romantic view of modern art – a view from which Hegel took pains to distance himself? Since Hegel's philosophy of art purports to earn its claims – including the thesis about art's pastness – from the art-historical development it unfolds, we should at least look to the art *prior* to the emergence of Hegel's own 'science of art' for a clue to Hegel's meaning here. And given the structure of Hegel's own lectures it should make sense, I think, to look to the culmination of the development as Hegel himself patently saw it – namely, to Shakespeare – for the fullest indication of how Hegel saw art's loss of vocation as registered *by art*: 'the self-transcendence of art but within its own sphere and in the form of art itself' (Hegel 1975, 113).

By declaring that we have long since not been able to rely on the historical continuance of art-making to teach us art's significance, to satisfy our most fundamental cognitive needs (which is not to say that art satisfies no important cognitive needs), Hegel issues a challenge to – he throws down a gauntlet in the face of – the contemporary human sciences. If we are to more adequately entertain the thought that Hegel

24 Because I see no evidence for this assumption in Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art*, I wonder if it is attributable to Hegel's phrase, from the *Philosophy of Right*, that 'philosophy is its own time comprehended in thought'. That is, I wonder if there is (in the secondary literature) a conflation of the task of philosophy as Hegel sees it (Hegel's 'science of art,' in this case) and a central claim of that philosophy (that 'art is and remains a thing of the past'). This assumption is by no means universal in the secondary literature, however. Stephen Houlgate, for instance, interprets Hegel's thesis to mean that 'modern, post-Reformation art fails to provide us with the same *religious* satisfaction that earlier ages were afforded by their art'. See Houlgate 2007, xxi, as well as the discussion by Gethman-Siefert in Hegel 2014 and Harries 1973–1974.

25 For, instance in the section on 'the end of the romantic form of art', Hegel writes: 'No Homer, Sophocles, etc., no Dante, Ariosto, or Shakespeare can appear in our day; what was so magnificently sung, what so freely expressed, has been expressed; these are materials, ways of looking at them and treating them which have been sung once and for all ... the rest is paler and paler' (Hegel 1975, 608).

was right, and thereby at least pick up the gauntlet, it might be useful to consider Shakespeare's possible agreement with Hegel's assessment.

To wit: in his 2010 book, *The Moment of Caravaggio*, Michael Fried alludes to what he calls an 'immensely suggestive' 'comparison ... of a dialectical sort' between the emergent absorptive strategies of Caravaggio's early seventeenth-century paintings and Shakespeare's dramas from the very same years.²⁶ Fried does not pursue the comparison, but given his well-known development of the issue of 'theatricality' over many years, we might surmise that pursuing the comparison dialectically would mean, at a minimum, considering ways in which modern drama (at least, Shakespearean drama) might also contain or develop anti-theatrical strategies – might *register* – or *reflect* on the issue of 'theatricality', as modern painting is said to do.²⁷ If so, however, then such a dialectical comparison would trouble Fried's own conclusion that the fate of art's anti-theatrical strategies can be pursued metonymically by considering the history of modern *painting*, exclusively, as the modern art in which, as Pippin puts it, 'the defeat of theatricality is an essential condition of the work's being an artwork ... where the existence of *painting as an art* is at stake'.²⁸

Indeed, pursuing the comparison might allow us to make good on the suggestion that what is at stake in the history of modern painting – above all, its *own* struggles with what Pippin calls the 'pressure on absorptive strategies in painting [which arise] because the actions and practices in the emerging modern world ... that *can compel genuine absorption* might now be few and far between' – is already registered within Shakespeare's drama, as an emerging problem for modernist painting and, indeed, for all art (Pippin 2014, 92; emphasis in original). I have already alluded to those overtly theatrical-imagistic 'spectacles' that Prospero conjures

26 Fried 2010, 229.

27 Fried seems to suggest as much, implicitly if not explicitly, in what he says about the difference between Shakespeare's Protestant culture and Caravaggio's Catholic Rome – and about 'the exemplary figure of Christ' *in propria persona* as 'a ... guarantor of fine-grained meaning' for Caravaggio. But he does not pursue the thought. See Fried 2010, 107.

28 I am citing Pippin's recent gloss of Fried, in Pippin 2014, 85 – emphasis modified. I note, also, that Fried seems to have amended some of the formulations in *Absorption and Theatricality* in his later work, to accommodate just this kind of dialectical comparison between paintings and stage plays. For instance, his famous formula from the 1980 text – 'the primordial convention that paintings are made to be beheld' – becomes 'the primordial convention that paintings (and stage plays) are made to be beheld' in Fried 2011, 93.

(*The Tempest* IV.i) – but we should note that those moments are blended with the ostensibly more ‘absorptive’ moments of *The Tempest*: Prospero confronting his usurping brother, dealing with Caliban, marrying off his daughter, Miranda, and so on. As if the challenge of discerning the genuinely absorptive from the theatrical just were part of the challenge that Shakespeare registered, while trying to make dramatic poetry in a modern, secular, market-driven world (assuming, of course, Shakespeare was doing more than concocting mere distractions, like bear-baiting or acrobatic circus acts). After all, the question for any commercially dependent modern dramatic poet, like Shakespeare – who did not manifestly expect his own dramas to be received as artworks – is unavoidably: *What non-religious actions or situations* might, if depicted aright, compel an audience to pay money to sit through a play? And what would make it worth their time and attention, and not just their money? Once religiously sanctioned social rituals are no longer credibly binding, the emergent market-based social world – secular, capitalist modernity – requires any commercially viable theatre to ‘work out’ whether *anything* human beings might be depicted as doing is absorbing beyond offering a chance for an audience to be distracted or ‘entertained’ for a few hours.²⁹

Shakespeare himself was not above turning out interludes that look like ‘mindless entertainment’ (as in the masques just mentioned), though over and over he seems also to have been interested in seeing whether such ‘theatricality’ might turn out to be compellingly interwoven with the stuff of what had once seemed to be purely absorptive moments. I mean, all the internal strife of ‘Shakespearean plots’, in which brother betrays brother, in which kingdoms are at risk, daughters grow apart from fathers, all once again gathered up and recycled in *The Tempest* as if to ‘test’ the old formulae – or, I want to say, as if to work out what it might mean *for all that* (high-vocationally) ‘absorptive’ art to be and remain past, a bygone parade.

29 For example: the Christ figure, as Fried observes, did not hold the absorptive power for Shakespeare that the redeemer still held for Caravaggio’s audience. Think, too, of the Puritans of Shakespeare’s day, angrily denouncing the crowds as they abandoned the churches for a ‘sinful’ afternoon matinee of bear-baiting or a performance of *As You Like It*. Pippin usefully notes and discusses Hegel’s intriguing phrase *herauszuarbeiten* (‘to work out’) – for example, as when Hegel says, ‘the mode of artistic production was such that what fermented in these poets they could work out *only* in this form of art and poetry’ (Hegel 1975, 102). See Pippin 2014, 41–42.

For Fried, the defeat of theatricality is the condition of art's survival (at least, in the realm of modern painting). But I think Shakespeare is inducting us, right at the (Caravaggio) 'moment' at which Fried's narration of modern art begins, into a world in which painting's primacy in the arts has already become a 'thing of the past' – the world of capitalist, secular modernity, in other words, which Shakespeare's London theatre knows all too well. As just indicated, I think that Shakespeare's (artistic) registration of art's pastness is one reason Hegel holds Shakespeare in such high regard, placing him (and 'dramatic poetry') at the end of the *Lectures*. Shakespeare knows – has learned, or taught himself – that new modes of recognition between audience and performer, new modes of intelligibility between human beings can no longer be achieved or evoked *just* through the structure of beholding, or the proffering of artistically absorbing content. This also squares with Hegel's own account of painting, which focuses on Italian, German and Northern European painting, with an occasional nod to the Spanish, but mostly leaves out the paintings 'after Shakespeare' that are Fried's primary focus. Hegel, of course, acknowledged that painting could go on – even flourish *as painting* – after its loss of vocation as art. The ongoing adventure of painting as painting (as the high vocation of the aesthete, but no longer as fine art) is one way art's pastness is manifested.³⁰

We can get a preliminary sense for Shakespeare's understanding of this, I think, by recalling the way in which his mature dramas continually present the challenges of mutuality and recognition in human affairs as open ended – as manifestly unsatisfied via available social, economic, political, familial forms of life, which themselves are shown to have fallen into 'crisis' ('Elsinore', 'Lear's Kingdom', Prospero's 'Island' and so on), *and* as unsatisfiable by the internal relation established between the drama and its audience.³¹ In other words, Shakespeare presents the challenges of mutuality as incompletely formed, both within the nascent social life of the early modern horizon, *and* by whatever artworks make

30 I have already mentioned Fried's work. T.J. Clark's contribution to this volume might be read as proposing a history of French painting, in and after Hegel's own lifetime, in which we catch a glimpse of painting's afterlife (after painting has done all it can do as *fine art*, has annulled itself as art) but not all it can do *as painting* in legitimating its persistence; it is as if French painting's significance (for us) were in part its abiding testimony to what is, finally, but a moment of Hegel's philosophy of fine art.

31 For a longer discussion, see Kottman 2009.

intelligible – and this double presentation is *internal* to Shakespeare's drama, part of its own self-limitation.

Consider: The 'high points' of history painting or portraiture just before and after Shakespeare – Veronese, Titian, Velázquez or even David – are still routinely understood by contemporary scholarship as giving intelligible form to struggles for recognition to which (then) contemporary forms of life remained blind, via painting's establishment of its own authoritative sphere.³² Shakespeare, however, took pains to show us that art's authority is no longer safeguarded just by installing that sort of 'spectator-beholder' relation. I do not have the space to make good on this suggestion here, but – again, to get a sense of what I mean – recall Hamlet's failed attempt to 'catch the conscience of the king' by staging 'something like the murder of my father / Before mine uncle'. In that scene, the dialectic of absorptive content (world-historical political-familial-ethical crisis) and theatricality (*Hamlet's* 'Mousetrap' is the very paragon of theatricality) is brought to its breaking point, leaving us with no sense that – wherever the demands of mutual recognition remain open-ended, reflections on ethical life incompletely formed – art can come to the rescue and help us still. Rather, by already admitting a constant 'contamination' of more 'theatrical' moments (Shakespeare's appeals to the 'groundlings,' his meta-theatrical Masques and so on) with more absorptive content (the rotten state of Elsinore, of Prospero's Milan and so on), Shakespeare over and over goes out of his way to show us art's self-limitation: the *pastness* of the hope that the sensuous embodiment of unacknowledged claims on mutual recognition could be directed at a beholding audience in the hope of identifying or rectifying failures of mutual intelligibility (again, which is not to say that art no longer has *any* cognitive work to do).

The emergence of capitalist economies, state-sanctioned property rights, the collapse of hereditary monarchies (*all* of which undergird Claudius' own 'election' to the throne), the expropriation of wealth from the Church and the rise of the 'middle class' in the wake of the Reformation and colonial trade, the spread of republican forms of government,

32 I take my cue here from a train of thought suggested in Horowitz 2014. Fred Rush, in this volume, also notes that Hegel's own history of painting inverts the traditional hierarchy of 'history painting', 'portraiture', 'still lifes' – and sees the end-state of painting in Dutch still lifes, roughly contemporary to *The Tempest*. Rutter 2010 notes Hegel's dissatisfactions with the Dutch (a dissatisfaction Hegel did not feel with Shakespeare).

class consciousness, the rise of the culture industry, nascent feminism (*all* of which are registered *internally* to Shakespearean drama's self-understanding, not merely as external historical facts) – all of this must matter to art's changing sense of its own vocation. To think otherwise would be to treat art as immune to, internally resistant to, historical developments. Indeed, as I have already suggested, it was to prevent his art from becoming ahistorical – or historically irrelevant – that Shakespeare embedded art's loss of vocation into his own drama. Whether in *Hamlet* or the *Tempest*, grasping that the challenges of mutuality and recognition are open-ended – seeing our own understanding of these challenges as incomplete, even lacking reflective form – requires seeing that the intelligibility of these challenges is not adequately 'formed' by art, not adequately apprehended by the relationship that art installs between audience and performer. And seeing *that* required a dramatic art that realised its own limitations, internally, in the ways to which I just alluded.

I am tempted to say, although this will require more explanation, that the significance of Shakespearean drama for Hegel just *is* Shakespeare's artistic registration of art's historical loss of vocation.

III.

According to the most common interpretation of Hegel's claim about art's pastness, Hegel's point was that art's significance as a social institution has weakened or faded for us, because the rationality that founds the abstract norms of modern ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*] – above all 'the distinction between state and civil society and the basic structures of modern civil society' – represents 'the achievement of reconciled relations of genuinely mutual recognitional status' (Pippin 2014, 36).³³ According to this interpretation, to which Pippin subscribes, when Hegel says things like, 'the conditions of our present time are not favorable to art' (Hegel 1975, 10), he is believed to mean that 'the basic structure of modern society had become at least incipiently rational ... in a way that no longer required a

33 This is not the only interpretation – there are other elements, too, such as the decline of 'beauty' in post-classical art or the increasingly arbitrary and quotidian 'content' of late romantic art – but it seems to be the most prominent. See also the discussions in Danto 2004; Henrich 2003a and 2003b; Rush 2010; Rutter 2010; Peters 2013 (on the 'beauty' question); and Sebastian Gardner's contribution to this volume.

distinctly sensible-affective comprehension ... We have reached a form of self- and other-understanding where there is nothing left to be “worked out”, no fundamental residual irrationality in the way we make claims on each other and about the world’ (Pippin 2014, 36–37).³⁴

As Gregg Horowitz has observed, however, ‘this interpretation is at odds with another of Hegel’s key claims, that *the reawakening of philosophy*, that is, discursive rationality in its highest and most reflexive form, is itself responsible for the “higher estimation” of art in modern culture’.³⁵ And as Sebastian Gardner argues in his contribution to this volume, it is difficult to understand Hegel’s claim about art’s pastness without also recognising that Hegel’s insistence on philosophy’s (historical) transcendence of art amounts to a direct objection to post-Kantian Romantic attempts to demonstrate art’s cognitive superiority to philosophy (as well as Hegel’s rejection of the claim that ‘art’s cognition is equaled, but not surpassed, by philosophy’). That is, Hegel goes out of his way to emphasise something that – were Pippin’s interpretation of Hegel’s claim about art’s pastness correct – would be contradictory: namely, Hegel underscores that our ‘esteem’ for art does not fade but rather *rises* when art’s pastness comes into view. Our esteem for art increases, as Hegel puts it, when ‘the form of art has ceased to be the supreme need of spirit’, when we no longer ‘bow the knee’ before the statues of the Greek gods, or paintings of Christ and Mary.³⁶ Contra Novalis, Schlegel, Schelling and Solger, art is newly alive and compelling to us, for Hegel, not because it continues *alongside* philosophy as a mode of cognition, but because art now can be seen historically, its highest vocation understood to be and to remain a thing of the past. Only when art is grasped as part of Spirit’s self-education – that is, by seeing art in historical perspective – can a ‘science of art’ begin and rise to the heights it attains in Hegel’s system.

34 For a similar view, see Danto 2004, 540.

35 Horowitz 2001, 59 (my emphasis).

36 Hegel writes: ‘We may well hope that art will always rise higher and come to perfection, but the form of art has ceased to be the supreme need of the spirit. No matter how excellent we find the statues of the Greek gods, no matter how we see God the father, Christ and Mary so excellently and perfectly portrayed: it is no help; we bow the knee no longer’, Hegel 1975, 1. 103. This passage is discussed by Pippin towards the end of *After the Beautiful*, where Pippin denies Hegel’s central claim about art’s having ceased to be the supreme need of Spirit. For Pippin, ‘Art ... has clearly not ceased to be a supreme need of *Geist*’ (Pippin 2014, 130); cf. Squire’s discussion in this volume, pp. 139–148.

Against philosophical Romanticism's strong aesthetic claim for art's cognitive equality or even superiority to philosophy, Hegel's claim is that our esteem for art in late modernity is intertwined with our apprehension of art's pastness, and hence (at least in this respect) with philosophy's transcendence of art's cognition.³⁷

The word 'remains' [*bleibt*] – 'art is and remains for us a thing of the past' – is often elided in interpretations of Hegel's dictum, including Pippin's, as Horowitz points out.³⁸ Pippin does emphasise that the 'self-transcendence of art' in romantic art means that, for Hegel, art 'still enacts such transcendence as art' – but in the same passage Pippin also suggests that Hegel meant to underline the 'finality of the achievement of romantic art' (2014, 36–37, my emphasis). And this judgment of 'finality' is (in Pippin's view of Hegel's view) underwritten 'not because of some internal aesthetic feature of late romantic art that required such a reduced significance' but rather because 'the basic structure of modern society had become at least incipiently rational' (Pippin 2014, 36–37). Here it is worth noting that this, too, seems at odds with Hegel's own 'science of art'; for Hegel is at pains to emphasise that art's limits are not imposed upon art by something outside art (natural or socio-historical conditions) – since, for Hegel, it is precisely art's task to draw the line between itself and whatever falls outside it.³⁹ So even if Hegel regarded the basic structure of modern society (objective spirit) as at least incipiently rational, that would still not be sufficient justification for him to declare art (a dimension of Absolute Spirit) a thing of the past. Hegel would still want to know how that incipient rationality had been taken up *by* art as part of *its* internal self-limitation.

37 As Gardner puts it, in his contribution to this volume, mentioning Pippin's *After the Beautiful* as an example, 'there is ... a significant tendency in later history of art's self-reflection that seems to take the side of philosophical Romanticism'.

38 Pippin 2014, 8 and the second chapter of the same book; Horowitz 2001, 59–60. See also Geulen 2006. Fred Rush, in his contribution to this volume, points out that: 'Art that is past is not simply dead, nor is it merely of antiquarian or nostalgic interest. Such art – indeed Hegel holds ultimately all art – is always with *Geist* in its being-past. Hegel's doctrines of recollection (*Wiederholung/Erinnerung*) and reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) require this result'.

39 Gardner puts this point well in this volume: 'Whatever has an effect *on* art must first be assimilated *by* art.'

At any rate, the fundamental argument of *After the Beautiful* rests on Pippin's assertion that Hegel was flat wrong on these two counts: that is, Pippin thinks that Hegel was wrong about the incipient rationality of the basic structures of modern society, *and* that this is partly why Hegel was *therefore* wrong about art's pastness (Pippin 2014, 37):

In a word – and I shall simply assume that this does not need to be argued – this [namely, that ‘there is no fundamental residual irrationality in the way we make claims on each other and about the world’] is all clearly as false a claim about European modernity ... and that is being false means that ... the realization of freedom would *still* require, in Hegel's own terms, an attempt at the sort of understanding just referred to: an objective embodiment and self-recognition, or the world of art.

Hence, for Pippin (2014, 130), ‘Art ... has clearly not ceased to be a supreme need of *Geist*’.

Pippin's aim, then, is to unfold a narrative of modern art (painting in *After the Beautiful*; film in many of his other writings) according to which *other* central claims about art, which Pippin sees as Hegel's truer or most important claims, can continue to function as guides to ‘the meaning of normative change in visual art’ (Pippin 2014, 31). Those claims are as follows: according to Pippin, ‘Hegel's view was that the production or “externalization” of our ideas in artworks represents a distinct and, *until very recently*, indispensable form of self-knowledge’ (Pippin 2014, 32, my emphasis). [Note the phrase ‘*until very recently*’, contra my suggestions about Shakespeare's place in Hegel's *Lectures*, above.] By ‘indispensable form of self-knowledge’, Pippin means whatever ‘is presupposed as counting for “reality” in our attempt to render the world intelligible’; in other words, our dynamic and fluid conceptual structure of experience.⁴⁰ ‘In its full Hegelian glory’, writes Pippin (2014, 5), ‘the official formulation

40 Pippin calls Hegel's philosophy of art a ‘prelude to Hegel's own speculative logic, where he claims constantly to be differentiating his approach from the fixed, formalizable, stable, self-standing notions of “the understanding” and to be proposing a more dynamic, fluid, “animated” account of conceptual interrelation, and so conceptual content’ (Pippin 2014, 5). By using the term ‘prelude’, I wonder if perhaps Pippin means to refer to the 1831 Preface to a new edition of the *Science of Logic*, written just before Hegel's death; the 1812 edition of Hegel's *Logic* precedes Hegel's 1820s *Lectures on Fine Art* by several years.

of the approach is that art embodies a distinct mode of the intelligibility of the “Absolute”.

Such ‘official formulations’ require more unpacking than I can manage in this short space.⁴¹ But one of Pippin’s condensations can be cited by way of explanation. ‘The central claim’ – as Pippin puts it (2014, 38–9) – concerns:

... the issue of the conditions of the possibility of the intelligibility of modern fine art in general and, given the increasing pressure modernist art places on conceptual articulation, or what we now call criticism, of modernist art in particular. That central claim is ... the distinguishability and, more radically, the inseparability of concept and intuition in experience and, similarly, a form of practical mindedness, intentions, *in* bodily movement *in* action. Hegel denied that the basic capacities needed to understand what we experience and what we do, active and passive capacities, were separable or separately contributing components of experience and action, as if in some two-step process. He maintained that, especially, any sensible passivity or sensible inclination could play whatever role it was to play only if conceptually informed, already determined in a way of some spontaneous discrimination. This claim ... required a thorough reconsideration of the very possibility of intelligibility in experience and action (Hegel’s major project, as I understand him) ... [This claim] especially associated the intelligibility of artworks with the intelligibility of bodily movements we count as actions, where successfully circulating social norms are necessary for the content and the ascribability of the action to be fixed.

Pippin, then, takes Hegel’s most abidingly significant claim about art *not* to be his claim about art’s having become *ein Vergangenes*, but rather these other claims: that fine artworks function as ‘vehicles for the practical realization of the relevant speculative truth’, as sensuous modes for the intelligibility of the Absolute. Hence, Pippin’s gambit in *After the Beautiful* is to dissociate Hegel’s first claim from Hegel’s second claim. He even accuses Hegel of undermining, with his claim about art’s pastness, this

41 See Pippin’s fuller discussion: Pippin 2014, 38–42. Pippin has taken up the question of Hegel’s appropriation and criticism of Kant’s understanding of the relation between concept and intuition for many years. For instance, Pippin 1989 and 2004/2005.

second and (for Pippin) ‘most important claim’ about art as an ongoing effort of making the Absolute intelligible.⁴² Having separated Hegel’s two claims, Pippin then feels entitled to conclude that the sensuous embodiment in fine art of self- and other-understanding – mutuality, social subjectivity, self-reconciling spirit – is not a thing of the past at all, but is still being ‘worked out’ in modernist painting. ‘Modernist painting will begin to work out, in its uniquely aesthetic mode of intelligibility, the historical fate in modernity of the social subjectivity necessarily at issue in *the painting’s address to the beholder*’ (Pippin 2014, 22, emphasis in original). For Pippin, the normative ruptures in the visual arts that adhere in modernism can be ‘explained’ as ongoing artistic efforts to come to grips with the logic of social subjectivity and the demands of mutuality in late modern societies.⁴³

IV.

There are, I think, three shortcomings or missteps in Pippin’s interpretation of Hegel which – once identified – can help us begin to better illuminate the meaning and significance Hegel’s claim about the abiding pastness of art.⁴⁴

The first of Pippin’s missteps is also identified by Horowitz. Namely that, in pointing to the incipient rationality of modern society, Hegel never meant – as Pippin claims – to suggest that ‘we have reached a form of self- and other-understanding where there is nothing substantial left to be “worked out”, no fundamental residual irrationality in the way we

42 Pippin calls the second claim, ‘the most important Hegelian contribution to a theory of art’ (Pippin 2014, 42). And later he says that he is ‘tempted to rest [his] whole case for the relevance of Hegel to these questions’ on that interpretation (Pippin 2014, 49).

43 Again, see the parallels drawn between Pippin’s conclusions and Gardner’s account of philosophical Romanticism in his contribution to this volume. Pippin himself gives the opening epigraph of *After the Beautiful* to Schelling.

44 Moreover, although this will not be my task here, once Hegel’s claim about art’s pastness is better illuminated, it might also be reconnected to his claim about art as a sensuous mode of apprehending the Absolute, thereby allowing us to see how Hegel’s full panoply of claims cohere precisely where Pippin wants to draw them apart. This might also help us to better measure Hegel’s position against those of his contemporaries, *pace* Gardner.

make claims on each other and about the world' (Pippin 2014, 37).⁴⁵ I think Horowitz has the spirit (if not always the letter) of Hegel's text right when he says, instead, that 'from the standpoint of [Hegel's] Absolute Knowing ... the problem of the unsatisfied demands of mutuality and recognition can never be solved once and for all'.⁴⁶ In other words, Hegel's point was not that the institutions of modern ethical life represent a historical moment after which 'there is nothing substantial left to be "worked out"'. Just the opposite. For Hegel, the institutions of modern life represent the historically achieved awareness that the demands of 'self- and other-understanding' can now be taken up reflectively in and as historical-institutional-ethical problems; that the problems that adhere in 'self- and other-understanding' are products of human history; and that therefore the demands of mutual intelligibility in human affairs are themselves grasped *in* our historical practices, rather than as allegedly perennial questions (like the culture-nature problem).

It should be noted (Horowitz does not mention it) that Pippin certainly agrees that the demands of mutuality are not a "problem" of the sort that will ever allow a "solution" (Pippin 2014, 95). But it is just because the demands of mutuality are open-ended, Pippin thinks, that art goes on without having ceased to be a supreme need of *Geist*. That is, Pippin's attempts to marshal Hegel's philosophy of art here and elsewhere – in his interpretations of Hollywood films, for instance – depends upon the view that art continues to be a fundamental way in which the demands of mutual intelligibility are brought to light, given objective embodiment in a movie or a painting. But Pippin's marshalling of Hegel in this way assumes the adherence of a kind of immunity in the attempt at understanding (art) from what is ostensibly being understood (the demands of mutual intelligibility in human affairs). A more dialectical procedure would have to take into consideration the ways in which art not only embodies (as Pippin 2014 argues) the increasingly complex

45 In his earlier book (Pippin 2008), Pippin treats Hegel's analysis of the modern state at length. In that book, overall, Pippin's reading seems closer to the one I am proposing here. Namely, that Hegel sought to show that free agency is essentially norm-governed, intersubjective and institutional, and thus only possible within the social context of modern ethical life – which seems to be different from saying that there is 'no fundamental residual irrationality in the way we make claims on each other and about the world'.

46 See also my discussion of Hegel in Kottman 2017b, esp. 165; cf. in particular footnote 206, where I read Hegel in this way. Here, I cite from Horowitz 2014.

demands on mutuality and self- and other-understanding in the modern world – but also registers and takes up *within its historical unfolding* whatever new demands on mutuality and self- and other-understanding an increasingly complex modern world throws our way (hence, also, whatever sensuous-practical non-artistic forms such demands might yet take). Such a dialectic procedure is, I believe, what led Hegel to insist on art's pastness. That is, Hegel saw that art was not only a means through which the historical demands of mutual intelligibility are themselves given an intelligible sensuous form (which is where Pippin stops), but that the form taken *by* the demands of mutual intelligibility in human affairs have become so various and differentiated as to resist objective embodiment in art, a resistance that artworks themselves came to somehow register. This also means that one way to reckon with the demands of mutual intelligibility, historically-ethically-institutionally, just *is* to face up to art's pastness. Put differently, art is so important to us now because its pastness is one of our most precious bearers of historically indexed demands of mutuality – of what meeting and failing to meet the demands of mutuality look like. I will go on to suggest that Shakespeare grasped this, too.

A corollary to this: the historical realisation that the demands of mutuality are being made intelligible in a range of social practices should prompt a reconsideration of *which* sensuous practices carry out this work, and how; of where they succeed and where they fail; how they begin and how they end. I take Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, for instance, to have been one effort to consider ways in which, say, the nuclear family or modern economic arrangements emerge as such practical domains. In another context, I have also suggested that sexual love should be taken as another sensuous mode of apprehending the Absolute.⁴⁷ In this sense, Pippin is right to say that Hegel gives us no reason to think that practical efforts – including sensuous efforts, though not necessarily 'artistic' efforts – to make the Absolute intelligible have not ceased to be supreme needs of Spirit.⁴⁸ But this, on its own, does not justify Pippin's (or the Philosophical

⁴⁷ See Kottman 2017b.

⁴⁸ Hegel of course excludes touch, taste and smell from the purview of the 'two theoretical senses' germane to fine art, 'sight and hearing', Hegel 1975, 38–39. I have tried to show how 'touch' – more precisely, how *we touch one another* – can indeed be a 'supreme need of *Geist*' in Kottman 2017b, 8, and passim. If, for Hegel, painting embodies an aspiration toward mutuality that is (at its purest) what he calls 'passionless love', then a not-merely-aspirational 'working out' of

Romantic) conclusion that, therefore, *fine art* ‘has clearly not ceased’ to be such a practice. In fact, I want to suggest that Hegel’s acknowledgment of art’s abiding pastness is an essential insight into the very challenge of grasping which practices might continue to ‘work out’ the demands of self- and other-understanding, and how they do it. In other words, I think (and I think Hegel thought) that acknowledging art’s ‘becoming past’ is one way in which a reconsideration of *which* practices carry out the demands of making the Absolute intelligible comes into view, historically.⁴⁹ For instance: implicit to the centrality of ‘love’ to romantic art (as Hegel sees it), is that love as a historical practice – as *itself* a historically developing sensuous apprehension of the Absolute (Kottman 2017b) – cannot come into view until after art in its highest vocation has stepped to the side. And, again, Shakespeare – in his way – grasped this, too.

Second, Pippin stresses that he sees a ‘Hegelian way’ of understanding art to entail a kind of analogy, if not an equivalence, between the ‘relation between an artwork and a beholder’ and a ‘subject-subject relation’ (86). Pippin’s suggestion – which he finds validated in Hegel’s image of the artwork as a thousand-eyed Argus, as well as in Fried’s work on ‘beholding’ – is that ‘the kind of claim made on one by a work of art [has] much to do with the kind of claim made by another person, by the mere presence of another person’. So much so, Pippin thinks, that the ‘modern logic of mutual subjectivity’ must somehow be embodied in modern art ‘as a sensible material object, [as] the continuing problem of the possibility of the sensible embodiment of sharable meaning, all in a context where the terms that set such a problem are not stable’ (95). [See Pippin’s contribution to this volume for more on this.]

Hegel, however, seems to have thought that the ‘modern logic of mutual subjectivity’ eventually gives rise to a form of life in which the deepest interests of individuals cannot be satisfied by seeking the right ‘sensuous apprehension’ of the demands such interests place on beholders, or on the relation between artwork and beholder. For Hegel, art does not achieve a speculative identity of inner and outer by continuing indefinitely as art, as a merely aesthetic phenomena, but rather by ‘annulling itself as art’.

Put in terms of painting: although painting embodies (in its address to its beholder, as well as its thematic content) an aspiration toward

that aspiration must belong to another sphere (to love as actualised freedom, rather than just to painting as aspiration to embody love).

⁴⁹ See also n. 53, below.

intimacy and mutuality or ‘love’, the *actualisation* of the speculative identity of self and other at work in love itself must – Hegel thinks – eventually take shape other than as the presentation of an art-object to an admiring beholder, although painting’s ‘working out’ of that bid for intimacy is one way that the aspirations of love first gain intelligible form, especially in Christian devotional painting.

After all, if Hegel had really held painting to be adequately analogous to the ‘modern logic of social subjectivity’, as Pippin suggests, then it is hard to see why Hegel would also have claimed that love is best grasped in painting only as the ‘passionless love’ of the Madonna for her child.

Consider: As Pippin points out in his contribution to this volume, “‘religious” or “passionless” [*leidenschaftslos*] love is the true, ideal subject matter of all painting’. We might simply call it parental love, which is what Hegel sees validated in Christian religion, too; namely, in its inversion whereby the privileged adoration of a transcendent ‘God’ by his ‘people’ is superseded by the adoration of a concrete, imminent child by his mother.⁵⁰ Hegel sees this realised in the history of painting, as Christian painting overcomes the ‘iconoclasm’ according to which the Divine (as transcendent) cannot be represented pictorially, in favour of seeing the ‘Divine’ as ‘love *reconciled* and at peace with itself ... spiritual subject-matter in the form of actual and bodily human beings, and therefore the object of this love must not be painted as a purely spiritual “beyond” but as actual and present ... above all the Madonna’s love for her child, as the absolutely suitable ideal subject for this sphere’ (Hegel 1975, 819). Painting, that is, achieves a new view of the ‘divine’ as passionless love for a child, rather than the iconoclastic (non-artistic) adoration of a Divine beyond. As Hegel points out elsewhere, love as ‘mutual subjectivity’ cannot flourish in modernity unless parents love their children more than children love their parents.⁵¹ Perhaps it is helpful here to note, too, that artists often regard their works as their ‘children’ – and that painting is often figured as a kind of ‘giving birth’ or ‘labor of love’. These metaphors – for they cannot be literally true (to destroy an artwork is a travesty, but it is not a murder) – might be taken as a clue to grasping the way in which paintings can demand a form of attentiveness that is significantly akin to the attentiveness required for the devotional love of children, in the sense that beholding fine paintings entails the attribution of an absolute

⁵⁰ See, for instance, the discussion in Hegel 1975, 816–827.

⁵¹ ‘On the whole, children love their parents less than their parents love them’: Hegel 1991, §175, Addition, 213. For more on this, see Kottman 2017b, 168–169.

value and passionless devotion to what is beheld – *lovingly* passionless, not merely disinterested (in Kant’s sense) – without the expectation that the love be ‘returned’ in kind from the artwork (or the child). This, I take it, is part of Hegel’s spin on Kant’s notion of disinterestedness.

At any rate, before we go as far as Pippin does with this analogy, we should note that while Hegel emphasises that the passionless devotion entailed in beholding ‘Christ the child’ as the most ‘important object of love in paintings’ (Hegel 1975, 820), Hegel nevertheless does not see this as adequate to comprehend ‘subject-subject’ relations *tout court*.

Indeed, Hegel is clear that the ‘mutual subjectivity’ of love cannot be restricted to such passionless devotion; he goes on to discuss the ‘heat of passion’ in dramatic and poetic presentations of love (Hegel 1975, 566–568). The Madonna’s passionless love is, in other words, only how the art of *painting* best grasps love-as-divine – inadequately and incompletely with respect to the fuller ‘modern logic of mutual subjectivity’, wherein love comes to necessarily include passion, caprice, the individual’s ‘heart for love and ... right to become happy through it’ (Hegel 1975, 568).

Hegel’s larger point, then, seems to be that the ‘modern logic of mutual subjectivity’ ultimately reveals – contra Pippin’s claim – the insufficiency of the art of painting’s analogousness to that very logic. And if Hegel’s ‘science of art’ is to be true to its name, then *that* insufficiency must also somehow show up *in art*. Which is why Hegel must *then* go on to emphasise the insufficiency of poetry and drama, too, when it comes to the sensuous comprehension of love’s intense, passionate contingency. [For example: dramatic art is no longer fine art when it devolves into merely the depiction of the ‘supreme contingency’ of passionate love, as Hegel puts it, ‘[or] in the ... caprice which has neither universality nor any scope beyond itself ... [and] which freezes us despite all the heat of passion in its presentation’ (Hegel 1975, 568).]

In such passages, Hegel seems to be suggesting that it is *dramatic-poetic* presentations of love – and not painting’s presentations – which instructively manifest their own failure to sensuously comprehend love as the modern logic of mutual subjectivity or ‘spirit as infinite subjectivity’. Put another way, in part because painting cannot annul itself *from within its own activity*, dramatic poetry is called for – if art is to *bring to an end* (not just be forced by external circumstances to conclude) its task of sensuously embodying the logic of mutual subjectivity – such that our grasp of art’s *becoming past* might yet instruct us with respect to the demands of ‘the modern logic of social subjectivity’, the ethical task of shared intelligibility in ‘subject-subject’ loving relations (Pippin 2014, 86).

In other words, art's becoming past with respect to the demands of comprehending 'love' is one way that we might continue to learn what love's demands can yet entail.⁵²

V.

Pippin's third misstep, then, at which I have already hinted, is to conclude that Hegel's claim about art's pastness arose from Hegel's belief about the incipient rationality of modern social life, rather than from Hegel's explicit statements about what his 'science of art' requires: namely, that grasping art 'scientifically' means grasping art as *self-limiting*, as a self-determining practice in its historical unfolding. [Which is not to say that the history of art is free from socio-historical determination, but rather to say that such determination is taken up *by* art, internal to its own development, and not just passively reflected in art.]

As already mentioned, Hegel's statements in this regard involve both a thesis about art – namely, the way in which fine art subjects itself to limitations that are registered internally *by* art *as* art's own limitations – and about philosophy in Hegel's time, namely, that the now-possible science of art sees its most essential condition of possibility in art's pastness. One way that Hegel begins building a bridge between these two statements lies in the basic features of his account of romantic art, since the historical advent of romantic art itself entails the recognition – internal to art – that 'art proper' (classical art) has 'dissolved'. So, before turning to Shakespeare, let me briefly outline the relevant features of Hegel's account of this.

Recall that, for Hegel, all art, as spiritual activity, distinguishes itself from nature. Fine artworks, which Hegel's philosophy of art seeks to elucidate, bear within themselves Spirit's self-distinguishing from nature. In order to clarify the relation between Spirit and nature, Hegel's philosophy of art tracks the distinction between Spirit and nature that is at work in art itself – again, so that this philosophy might be genuinely 'scientific'

52 In Kottman 2017b, I track ways in which 'love' finds its reflective form in artworks – especially poetic-literary works – but in a way which (I hope) also demonstrates that art is not, finally, entirely adequate to this task, and hence that love ought to be seen as itself a dimension of Absolute Spirit, reflectively but incompletely grasped in artistic (or religious or philosophical) presentations.

in the clarification and systematisation of its own foundations.⁵³ Because, for Hegel, this entanglement of nature and art is intrinsic to art, art never fully disentangles itself from sensuous nature; its ongoing entanglement with nature is part of its self-constitution as art, its self-distancing from nature.⁵⁴ 'In artistic production the spiritual and the sensuous aspects must be as one' (Hegel 1975, 39). However, art becomes art, not in view of these sensuous-natural properties, but only insofar as it has received 'the baptism of the spiritual' – even though that *Taufe* only occurs in the realm of nature (in sensuous making, and our sensual experiencing).

This means – and here I partly disagree with the interpretation offered by Julia Peters in this volume – not that 'spirit *is* nature', but rather that, in art, the claims of spirit appear *as if* they were the claims of dead nature. Dead nature is not itself animated; but artworks make dead nature *appear* as if it were animated. Nevertheless, dead nature's appearance as 'spirited' (in artworks) is just that – a 'pure *appearance*', one which is the 'offspring of spirit'. This is why Hegel thinks that, in order to become art proper, art must advance to what he calls the 'classical' moment: the 'anthropomorphism' of classical Greek sculpture. For, the anthropomorphic moment of classical art finally permits Hegel to say that dead nature, *despite appearances*, is inanimate. Classical sculpture, especially, drives home the lesson that dead nature is bereft of spirit. Art proper, in other words, is the moment when animism ('nature *is* spirit') becomes untenable. Classical art, we might say, is spurred *as spiritual activity* by our (rather traumatic) perception of dead nature as *unspirited*.

53 I have in mind such moments as when Hegel says: 'These preliminary remarks on beauty in nature and art, on the relation of the two, and the exclusion of the former from the scope of our proper subject, should dispose of the idea that the limitation is due merely to caprice and arbitrariness. The proof of this relation should not come here yet, since its consideration falls within our science itself and is therefore not to be further explained and proved until later' (Hegel 1975, 3). Or, a little later (Hegel 1975, 11): '... my view is that philosophizing is throughout inseparable from scientific procedure. Philosophy has to consider an object in its necessity, not merely according to subjective necessity or external ordering, classification, etc.; it has to unfold and prove the object, according to the necessity of its own inner nature. It is only this unfolding which constitutes the scientific element in the treatment of a subject'. See the discussion in Horowitz 2001, 58–59.

54 Hegel 1975, 35: '... the work of art presents itself to sensuous apprehension. It is there for sensuous feeling, external or internal ... just as nature is, whether the external nature that surrounds us, or our own sensitive nature within'.

This is why classical art is the stage at which art comes into its own *as art*; classical art finally faces up to this constitutive perception of dead nature not as merely heterogeneous or ‘other’, but as cold, spiritless or *geistlos*, deprived of *Geist*.⁵⁵

Now, in order for romantic art to have grown out of the dissolution of classical art in the way Hegel seems to think it did, it cannot emerge merely as the denial that classical art really was art proper (since that would just announce romantic art’s view of *itself* as proper art, something Hegel clearly does not mean to say). Instead, romantic art must somehow be continuous with the achievement and dissolution of classical art: which means that romantic art takes root in the realisation that *Geist* is not reducible to sensuous-natural immediacy, that *Geist* is free to determine what it does with sensuous immediacy, and hence that *Geist* involves itself in sensuous immediacy without forfeiting its own actuality. But *why* then should romantic art bother with such an involvement at all?

One possible answer is that late romantic art embodies an increasing de-naturalisation or ‘spiritualization’ of our self-understanding, by showing that we are less and less dependent upon – less needful of – artistic expressions that work with ‘natural’ or sensible media. And that lessening need is something that art itself must teach, such that the strained relation between *Geist* and sensuous immediacy is both the catalyst and internal combustion of romantic art – a generative instigation, rather than a blockage. According to this view, art had to be practised – indeed, with the enormous generative output that *is* romantic art (namely, most of what we take to constitute the history of fine art) – but in such a way that the ‘need’ for romantic art can be revealed to produce its self-transcendence.

But another answer leads in the direction to which I gestured in speaking of Shakespearean ‘sea-change’ and metamorphoses: namely, the pointing to a possible future in which art’s becoming past (as registered *in*, *by* and *as* ‘art-project’) does not mean a future in which the fundamental needs of *Geist* no longer require sensuous form, but rather a future in which our primary sensuous forms of reflection – in their highest vocation, in response to the deepest needs of *Geist* – are no longer recognisable as properly artistic. Such a future requires, therefore, that art recognisably become past.

⁵⁵ Hence, I would prefer to reverse Peter’s claim in this volume. The nature that is spirit’s ‘own’ is *spiritless nature*. Art proper is how we acknowledge and come to grips with nature as *empty* of spirit.

In conclusion, then, a brief discussion of *The Tempest* might afford a bit more illumination of this.

Consider Prospero's 'art' as Shakespeare's presentation of late romantic art, in the sense just briefly sketched: a reflective presentation of the emergence of Shakespeare's own drama (*The Tempest*) from out of Prospero's study and practice of all the arts. As in Hegel, so too for Prospero, this entails the lesson that nature does not determine what is to be done with nature's elements. Recall Prospero's own words (*The Tempest* V.i.41–50):

*I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azur'd vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-bas'd promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluck'd up
The pine and cedar: graves at my command
Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd forth, and let 'em forth
By my so potent Art ...*

But beyond this, we can see that Shakespeare's real dramatic interest – I mean, his interest in Prospero's 'art' and in the achievement of our de-naturalisation as a dramatically motivational predicament – lies in the manifestly social-historical (human) consequences of this lesson. As if the very experience of natural elements – the storm, the waves, the air – must now be regarded as springing from our artistic accomplishments.

In this way, we are brought to see that the result of Prospero's hyperbolic art lies not just in the storms he whips up but – as Miranda, and the rest of us find out – in the stirring social consequences and cognitive efforts that Prospero's art, at its apotheosis, tries to achieve. Two examples: first, Miranda, as Hegel pointed out (Hegel 1975, 582), is 'ignorant' of what she is, because she is ignorant of the historical demands of human sociality generally. Miranda, that is, is still related primarily to her all-powerful father who loves her passionlessly, just as Prospero's passionless love tumbles into his fraught desire to help Miranda find satisfying, passionate love with Ferdinand. And Prospero seeks at first to realise that desire *artistically* – to literally 'frame' Miranda's view of Ferdinand, to lift the curtain on that 'brave new world' (I.ii.405–505), to 'produce' their love affair the way one might 'direct' a play (a recurrent

theme in Shakespeare, where lovers are often 'set up' to fall in love). Second, Prospero desires to make himself newly known to his traitorous brother, Antonio, to finally gain his recognition as the rightful duke – while likewise acknowledging his brother in something approximating forgiveness. And this 'conscience-catching', too, is something that Prospero initially tries to bring about artistically – literally stupefying Antonio and his cohorts by means of a 'spell', as if to literalise a kind of extreme aestheticism, or 'beholder of art' position (III.iii.88–91):

*My high charms work,
And these mine enemies are all knit up
In their distractions: they are now in my power;
And in these fits I leave them ...*

Or consider the following (V.i.11–17):

*The King
His brother and yours, abide all three distracted ...
Brimful of sorrow and dismay ...
... Your charm so strongly
works 'em.*

There is, Shakespeare seems to have thought, more than a little sadism in Prospero's art – it often borders on torture.⁵⁶ As if the spectator-beholder relation concealed the pitilessness of the artist who knowingly induces the beholder to stupefaction ['thy brains ... boil'd within thy skull ... spell-stopp'd' (V.i.59–61)] which, in the end, inhibits or even forecloses a more fully human relationship between artist and audience – a human relationship which would require the artist to step aside *as* artist, to break the 'spell' of the artwork.

Of course, Shakespeare goes out of his way to present just that – the *dissolving* of the artistic bond – as the 'end' of Prospero's artistic project, for the sake of better meeting recognitive requirements in other forms of sensuous mediation (V.i.31–68):

56 The initial storm itself bears more than a little resemblance to waterboarding; see Kottman 2009, ch. 4.

*My charms I'll break; their senses I'll restore.
And they shall be themselves.*

...

... This rough magic

I here abjure ...

... The charm dissolves apace;

And as the morning steals upon the night,

Melting the darkness, so their rising senses

Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle

Their clearer reason.

Or, again (Vi.79–82):

Their understanding

Begins to swell; and the approaching tide

Will shortly fill the reasonable shore,

That now lies foul and muddy

In speaking of the self-cancellation and dissolution of romantic art, Hegel notes the way in which it ends – almost as if he were describing Prospero's efforts – 'with the artist's personal productive mastery of every content and form' in order that art might 'pass over to the presentation of common reality as such' (Hegel 1975, 576). All of this is emphasised by Shakespeare in explicit terms, with the result of Prospero's 'dissolved' charms being the newly lively and vibrant presentation – the re-introduction – of human beings to one another; such that the demands of mutuality might be taken up anew in the wake of the spellbinding charm's pastness, might break *through* art's self-concluding moments and thereby change art's form into something else entirely (Vi.74–75):

Flesh and blood,

You, brother mine ...

Or, again (Vi.108–165):

For more assurance that a living Prince

Does now speak to thee, I embrace thy body ...

... howsoever you have

Been justled from your senses, know for certain

That I am Prospero ...

*... No more yet of this;
For 'tis a chronicle of day by day,
Not a relation for a breakfast, nor
Befitting this first meeting.*

Or, most famously, as if now Shakespeare's audience were already being addressed directly (V.i.181–184):

*– O, wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in't!
– 'Tis new to thee.*

The spell dissolves, then, such that we might come to grasp how things between us actually stand. But if Prospero is to risk appearing to others as otherwise than an artist – if it is to be a risk and not merely a further demonstration of his unlimited artistry – then that 'letting go' of art must be a farewell to art's highest vocation as a sensuous presentation of the Absolute. To appear as otherwise than an artist requires a sensuous form of ethical reflection 'after' art – lest Prospero's new 'appearance' be taken for yet another demonstration of artistry.

So, finally – as if Shakespeare's drama, *as if all of art history*, had been a preparation for this moment – a human being stands forth, and steps away from the 'art' he made and from what that art itself wrought (Epilogue, 1–3):

*Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own
Which is most faint ...*

Even at this point, another moment is still required. The sensuous presentation that separated the play from our own lives must cancel itself. Not so that we might stand 'face-to-face' without forms of sensuous mediation, but so that the formal variety of sensuous apprehensions of the Absolute – their metamorphoses -- might begin to be collectively acknowledged. *We* are therefore asked to acknowledge that Prospero is no longer an artist, and that the 'play' as high-vocational artwork now remains a bygone thing (Epilogue, 4–10):

*I must be here confin'd by you
 ... Let me not
 ...
 ... dwell
 In this bare island by your spell;
 But release me from my bands
 With the help of your good hands ...*

... hence, we are no longer acquitted from the obligation to take up Shakespeare's non-artistic demands on our responsiveness.

Only when art is seen to step to the side, in this way, can 'the higher and indestructible bond of the Idea of beauty and truth' link us. Only after charms dissolve, such that art's pastness might come into view, can art's historical accomplishment at last be appreciated in the ways that Hegel and Shakespeare explicitly call for – not on bended knee, but in our esteem, in our *Geisteswissenschaften*, our forms of ethical life, our true applause.

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INGVILD TORSEN

THE FUTURE OF HEGELIAN ART HISTORY

On the body in late modern sculpture

A feature that shapes the history of art as told by Hegel is the shortcoming of the body – central to the visual art forms of sculpture and painting – when it comes to expressing the increasingly complex and abstract subject matter of art. The body is the form Spirit takes when it is expressed in visual art; but the body's inadequacy with respect to the content it is to make manifest is a reason why Hegel's history of art is a history of decline, culminating in Hegel's famous claim that art 'remains for us a thing of the past'.¹ Still, the body remains important in the visual art of the twentieth and twenty first centuries and as such continues to challenge a Hegelian narrative. There are bodies and features of embodiment in modernist and contemporary art that Hegel could probably never have imagined. One reason why he could not have imagined them is due to the historical changes in our conceptions of what bodies are, which features are significant for the body's look and which bodies are worthy of aesthetic attention. Another reason is the advent of abstraction in art, which radically changes the rendering of the human body: consider the gradual deconstruction the body's look undergoes from early cubist works, folding out the body's different sides and curves onto the flat surface of the canvas; Giacometti's coarse, elongated, figures [e.g. Fig. 10.1]; and de Kooning's ferocious women, where the aggressive brush stroke radically changes the expression of the voluptuous body. Further, abstraction makes possible expression of embodiment without a recognisable human figure – art can express what it is like to be embodied, without presenting us with a human body or figure at all. Imagining what Hegel would have thought about the art of the future is of course to entertain a counterfac-

¹ Hegel 1975, 11.

tual, and the historical Hegel might very well have been horrified by much contemporary art, and not recognised it as art at all. Still, attempting to think about the present in the light of Hegel's philosophy of art is a way of gaining new perspective both on our time and on his theory.

The underlying issue of this paper is the possibility of a Hegelian understanding of art after Hegel. I focus on sculpture, the art form that Hegel thought most successfully expressed Spirit in body, through what he called the classical Ideal. In order for Hegel's theory to be relevant for the future of sculpture, however, I suggest that we amend his theory with respect to the body. I address the issue by asking two different questions, that is: 'What is a body?' and then further, 'What can be expressed through embodiment in art?'. Moreover, I use resources from the phenomenological work of Merleau-Ponty to suggest answers that alter the Hegelian narrative. I will show that phenomenology can offer a philosophically interesting account of embodiment that can vindicate the body, both as subject matter for late modern art and as characteristic of the ontology of artworks themselves. Applying Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the bodysubject to sculpture also suggests an alternative history of art after Hegel that can preserve some of the strengths of Hegel's philosophical theory while granting a relevance to the art of Hegel's future.

THE HUMAN BODY AS SCULPTURE'S FORM

Hegel's arguments for the decline of visual art are based on claims about the shortcoming of the form of such art. Briefly put, the shortcoming is due to the limitations of what kind of content or subject matter can be expressed through the body: this is highly limited in the case of sculpture, and only somewhat better in the case of painting. Both genres fall short of capturing Spirit in its most complex and autonomous being. I will here concern myself primarily with sculpture.

In his analysis of sculpture, Hegel assumes that the human figure is 'the fundamental type for its productions'.² This type, or form, is given to us by nature, and not devised by sculpture itself. This implies that the artist is dependent on nature and consequently constrained both in terms of formal possibilities and subject matter. Formal inventiveness and

² Hegel 1975, 713.



10.1 Brassai (Gyula Halász), *Giacometti's Studio*, 1948 (29.5 × 20.5 cm).
Gelatin silver print. Paris: Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges
Pompidou, inv. AM2012-173 (photograph by Georges Meguerditchian).
© CNAC / MNAM / Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, New York.

development are not really possible, given that sculpture uses a form (the human body) that is extrinsic to the practice of art and which the genre is not free to manipulate or determine at will. The form also affects the possible content of the sculptural artwork. Hegel writes:³

... since the sculptor's material makes the portrayal necessarily an external one in a three-dimensional solid, the content of sculpture cannot be spirit as such, i.e. the inner life, immersed in itself and reverting out of the object to close with itself alone, but the spirit which *in its opposite, the body*, is just beginning to become conscious of itself.

And further:

... for this reason, sculpture must take, as its subject matter, out of the objective content of spirit *only that aspect which can be completely expressed in something external and corporeal*, because otherwise it selects a content which its material cannot adopt or bring in to appearance in an adequate way.

As we know, these constraints do not make it impossible to make fabulous sculptural artworks. The Ideal of classical Greek sculpture successfully contains the positive characterisations of sculpture. These works express Spirit, but the truth they instantiate is what Hegel names 'the objective side of spirit' – these works are not about subjectivity as finite selves or individual egos, instead '... sculpture has to present the Divine as such in its infinite peace and sublimity, timeless, immobile, without purely subjective personality and the discord of actions and situations'.⁴ The Ideal of classical sculpture offers us 'the eternal element in gods and men, divested of caprice and accidental egotism'.⁵

Hegel's position is *not* that sculpture reduces its subject matter to the human being represented as mere animal life. For Hegel, the body is not 'only' nature (Hegel is after all not a dualist in this respect); the human body is infused with Spirit and great sculpture reveals it thus. Rather,

³ Hegel 1975, 713, emphasis mine.

⁴ Hegel 1975, 712. By contrast, painting presents a body in a situation and can represent some aspects of agency, which makes it better in terms of expressive power; see below.

⁵ Hegel 1975, 713. For further discussion, see the chapters by Peters and Squire in this volume.

the only thing that could be successfully (as in fully and adequately) expressed in a three-dimensional body is Spirit at home and at rest in its externality, in its physical life-form. Spirit can only be partially manifest in this body – so much of what it is, its inwardness and its complex, free extension into the social world, cannot sit comfortably in such sculpted bodies. It is precisely the embodiment, ‘the perfect interfusion of meaning and shape’ between form as the body and content as the individuality of Spirit, that marks the shortcomings of sculpture. If an artist tries to give expression to more complex spiritual life in sculpture, which is the case in the transition to romantic art, the artist will always be left with a work that is unbalanced and wherein the content is pushing beyond the confines of the form. If you want motivation, volition, action, or individual character traits and psychological depth, you had better look for another form, in other words.

There are of course also bodies in the romantic art of painting. These bodies are, however, surrounded by landscapes and settings, which makes it possible to portray situations, which again allow the artwork to reveal a much richer sense of subjectivity, including, importantly, aspects of agency. As visual art develops into late romantic painting, the bodies on the canvas become increasingly unimportant. This is evident in, for example, Hegel’s description of the ‘magic’ of *sfumato*, resulting in ‘an inherently objectless play of pure appearance ... so fine, so fleeting, so expressive of the soul that they [the colours] begin to pass over into the sphere of music’.⁶ In this most extreme formulation, it seems to be almost accidental to the artwork that there are bodies in these paintings; instead, visual art approaches the less ‘bodily’ genres of music and poetry.

By the time Hegel’s art history ends, it appears as if the body has been wholly surpassed and left behind by art (it plays no role in the forms of music or poetry). And the reason for that is not arbitrary – in Hegel’s narrative a form is left behind as a candidate for revealing truth because it is inferior, not the stuff of the real questions that bother us and that must be confronted in the present. So, the art forms for which the body is central are not just different, but worse, in the sense of less relevant, by the time Hegel is lecturing in Berlin.

Obviously, after 1820 there are still bodies in art. We might respond to this fact in a manner similar to the response one could give to someone

⁶ Hegel 1975, 848.

pointing out that artworks are still being made after the declaration of the end of art: the point of Hegel's analyses of both was never about *existence*, but about the meaning of art when it is important and plays an indispensable *normative* role. The mere presence of bodies is no challenge to the claim that the peak of the body in art was actually more than two millennia ago, when the body was able to provide a fitting form for its content in Greek sculpture. However, when the body ceases to be necessary to the form of visual art, that is, when abstraction becomes a possible form, there is also a proliferation and multiplicity of bodies like never before: In the art of the last hundred years there are bodies of all sizes and shapes, bodies of colour, unfit bodies, ugly bodies, bodies that are incomplete, and formed plastic material that merely gestures at body parts or flesh. Why is the body still giving shape to the artist's material, at a historical point when the artist is free to shape his or her material without the constraint of nature on the chosen form? How can the presence of so many and different bodies in the art of late modernity be accommodated by the Hegelian narrative? These are the questions to which I now turn.

STRATEGIES AFTER HEGEL

Here are four possible strategies for dealing with Hegelian philosophy of art in the wake of the history of art after Hegel:

One is to say that Hegel is obviously just wrong, and that art as it continued after 1830 offers so many counterexamples to central assumptions in Hegel's theory that we are better off thinking of it as falsified than trying to develop or nuance the theory to encompass these cases.

Another is to say that Hegel is basically right – the human body has less potential as a form with respect to the content that it can engage, which does not mean that it is not interesting, but it means that it does not satisfy our highest need. We can think of this strategy as parallel to a way to respond to the end of art thesis in Hegel: the body and representation of human embodiment have clear shortcomings as formal conditions for visual art, but that does not mean that the body cannot play *some* role, nor does it mean that the continued presence of body in art presents a counterexample to the theory. However, making sculptures or paintings is a practice whose important moment has passed.

A third strategy is to say that Hegel got the form of visual art wrong. That is, when Hegel assumes that the human figure is characteristic of

the form of sculpture or painting, he is just mistaken, lacking the ability to imagine what the future possibilities of these genres are. If we correct for this error with respect to the formal constraints, then we also open the possibility that there might be other cases of successful unity between form and content than, for example, the Greek statue or the Renaissance religious painting. This is a possible way to save Hegel's theory and make it interesting for modernist art. Abstract visual art might, for example, be *just* the appropriate form for Spirit's attempt at self-reflection and self-determination that characterises freedom in modernism, that is, the content we want to see manifest in the art of late modernity. Such a strategy is compatible with an influential narrative of the sculpture of high modernism: with the advent of modernism, we are no longer confused by representational subject matter and the connection between sculpture and body is severed once and for all. Instead, we are able to decipher what sculpture really is about just from an analysis of the formal possibilities of the medium: sculpture is about space, exploring the different relations of the three-dimensional by drawing on relation, force, vectors. By this, I mean what Michael Fried called sculpture's 'syntax' – and one might cite as an example Anthony Caro's *Prairie* (1967) [Fig. 10.2].⁷ Here is Greenberg on the importance of space (first published in 1958):⁸

Until lately sculpture was handicapped by its identification with monolithic carving and modeling in the service of the representation of animate forms ... The human body is no longer postulated as the agent of space in either pictorial and sculptural art, now it is eyesight alone, and eyesight has more freedom of movement and invention within three dimensions than within two.

Greenberg is explicitly opposing what he believes to be the distinguishing features of sculpture with the human body. The body is what hinders sculpture from realising its potential, both when it is thought to be sculpture's form and when it is thought to be important for the experience of sculpture.

The final strategy – the one that I want to pursue – is to hold on to Hegel's thesis about the centrality of the body in sculpture, but consider

⁷ Fried 1998.

⁸ Greenberg 1993, 59.



10.2 Anthony Caro, *Prairie*, 1967 (96.5 × 582 × 320 cm). Private collection (previously displayed in Houston, Texas: Menil Collection).
© Courtesy of Barford Sculptures Ltd.; photograph by John Goldblatt.

that Hegel got the body wrong. In other words, I want to suggest that the form is not quite as constrained as Hegel imagines it to be and, consequently and more speculatively, that what this form can make manifest for us in terms of subject matter is not limited in the manner he describes in his analysis of the classical Ideal. I will suggest that the presence of bodies, in new, unthought varieties, is a sign that there are issues of embodiment and subjectivity that are still worth working through for Spirit at this stage in history. I will hence hold on to two central premises from Hegel's art history: the form of sculpture is tied to the human body and the goal of art is truth – a reflective inquiry which provides insight and aids a developing actualisation of who we are. I will turn to phenomenology, more specifically to Merleau-Ponty's account of the bodysubject, to give these two claims content. As a result, a different story about modernist sculpture (understood as sculpture after Hegel) will take shape.

The first two strategies seem to be the least interesting, condemning either Hegel or contemporary art to irrelevance. Dismissing Hegel, as per the suggested first strategy, is of course what many artists and thinkers have done over the last 200 years. In order to justify not just relegating Hegel to the history of philosophy, it is necessary to show that it is actually

fruitful, not just for saving Hegel, but for our own understanding of ourselves and our art, to take up this seemingly outdated, grand, systematic theory. The second strategy appears unpromising, since it is one that basically demotes art after Hegel as either something not that important, something other than art or as failed art. With Hegel, one could say, for example, that making naturalistic sculpture is making art, but of a less important kind, or that making artworks like for example Anthony Caro or Louise Bourgeois have done, is making something that cannot really be sculpture, given Hegel's definition. If one is interested in contemporary art, this conservative strategy then seems to be a rejection of the subject one is interested in. It might be the strategy that is most faithful to the text, but this kind of fidelity would also come at a high price, since it would basically amount to an admission that Hegel is less relevant for the late modern and contemporary art that many of us still find very interesting.

I take the third and fourth strategies to be providing reasons for why it is worth it still to consider modified versions of Hegel's theory. The third strategy is a way to insist on Hegel's continued relevance by maintaining many of the core tenets of Hegel's theory, but revising Hegel's understanding of the form of the different visual arts by including abstraction as a possibility of the form. This is the strategy I understand Robert Pippin to have pursued, most explicitly articulated in the article 'What was abstract art? (From the point of view of Hegel)'.⁹ Pippin's several readings of early modernist artworks, most recently in *After the Beautiful*, reveal this to be a fruitful approach.¹⁰ In *After the Beautiful*, which is a defence of the relevance of Hegel's theory for understanding modernist art, Pippin considers phenomenology, and the work of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger in particular, as Hegel's most promising contender. When arguing in favour of Hegel, one of Pippin's claims is that phenomenology has an impoverished account of what he calls *aesthetic intelligibility*, that is, 'an aesthetic way of rendering intelligible and compelling a variety of issues of the deepest importance to philosophy'.¹¹ This is because the phenomenological readings emphasise art's disclosive abilities on the level of ontology, as the event or 'happening' of being and/or meaning itself, allowing for less multidimensional interpretation of artworks, whereas his version of a Hegelian theory allows us also to see artworks as addressing socio-historically sensitive questions of identity

9 Pippin 2005, 279–306.

10 Pippin 2014.

11 Pippin 2014, 2.

and to give an account of how this can happen aesthetically, hence giving space for complex readings of both form and subject matter and how they necessarily are related.¹²

My suggestion in this essay, and the strategy I want to pursue here, is a response to Pippin's criticism. I aim to respond not by arguing about the details of Pippin's criticism of phenomenology, but rather by showing, positively, how phenomenology can offer a different account of embodiment, selfhood, intelligibility and their relations than what is discussed by Pippin, and that this account can in fact help us describe and make sense of late modern art.¹³ Hence the third and fourth strategies can be seen as contenders for how to amend Hegel's theory in order for it to still be relevant to our late modern art.

THE BODY OF PHENOMENOLOGY

My aim is to propose a phenomenological rethinking of Hegel's narrative. The first step in doing so is to ask: What is the body that gives form to sculpture? I am going to turn to Merleau-Ponty for an answer, as provided in his early work.¹⁴ In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty gives us an account of our being as embodied, expressive, intentional beings, what he calls *bodysubjects*. A living, human body is always that of a body-subject. This body is intentional, in that it is open to the world through perception, and its perception is always directional, never merely receptive or passive.¹⁵ The body is directed towards its surroundings as something that both conditions it and is already anticipated by it, hence there is no question of priority or grounding one way or the other. The bodysubject is

12 For the comparison, and eventually the shortcomings of phenomenology *vis-à-vis* Hegel's theory, see Pippin 2014, esp. 114–130.

13 I discuss the parallels and differences between a Heideggerian and a Hegelian approach to modern, non-representational art in Torsen 2014.

14 Some of what I will present as original in Merleau-Ponty's account of the body anticipates features that will be developed in his later ontology. Particularly his notion of *flesh* and the status of alterity would be relevant, but these themes also move us further from a recognisable Hegelian outlook. For reasons of space, I do not discuss Merleau-Ponty's later work here.

15 This is of course a very broad-strokes characterisation of the project of the book. More nuanced introductions to Merleau-Ponty's project can be found in Barbaras 2004, Carman 2008 and Romdenh-Romluc 2010.

always outside itself and the world is always that of bodysubjects.¹⁶ A key to understanding this being-in-the-world of a bodysubject is the notion of a body schema. A body schema is a proprioceptive matrix that gives orientation to perception and action, but which is also pliable, responding to an environment and a historical context through what we can think of as a kind of feedback-loop of embodied, intentional agency.¹⁷ The account is not merely of a bodysubject in general, as a kind of embodied transcendental subject, since Merleau-Ponty also describes, through analysis of anomalies and normal behaviour, how habits, social roles and the complex identities of late modern individuals are sedimented into our bodies as they modify our body-schema. Such schema, decisive for the bodysubject, are upon reflection available to the first person point of view, can be described discursively and can also be used to make sense of bodily behavioural patterns, as observed by third parties. The strength of the phenomenological approach and the notion of the body schema in particular can be seen in the way it has helped articulate different experiences of bodily existence. In addition to the illumination of the various pathologies discussed in *Phenomenology of Perception*, this is apparent, for example, in Iris Marion Young's descriptions of the posture and movement characteristic of feminine bodily comportment and in Franz Fanon's description of how the white gaze changes his own being through a racialised body schema.¹⁸

Merleau-Ponty's account of the bodysubject and of embodied perception were recognised as productive for interpreting the development

16 For Merleau-Ponty this is not an abstraction, but the most concrete starting point of the phenomenological description: 'The ontological world and body we uncover at the core of the subject are not the world and the body as ideas; rather, they are the world itself condensed into a comprehensive hold and the body itself as a knowing-body' (Merleau-Ponty 2014, 431).

17 In *Phenomenology of Perception*, the concept of body schema is developed in order to make sense of the puzzles presented by various anomalies (most famously the case of visual agnosia exhibited by Gelb and Goldstein's patient Schneider after suffering brain injury) where traditional mechanistic or psychological explanations fall short and a different understanding of the living body is needed. See especially the analysis of 'The spatiality of one's own body and motricity' in Merleau-Ponty 2014, 100–148. In the last decades, there has been much more empirical research on proprioception, much of which appears to fit nicely with Merleau-Ponty's claims about the conditions making possible embodied subjectivity. For an introduction to the relationship between contemporary research on embodiment and phenomenology, see Gallagher 2005.

18 Young 1980; Fanon 2008.

of sculpture since the advent of minimalism, were thought to enrich the philosophical understanding of our experience of sculpture and of how the art form works more generally and were also influential for many of the artists of the 1960s.¹⁹ For both minimalist artists and the art historians who tried to understand their work, phenomenology was an important ally to critique the high-modernist narrative of sculpture represented by Fried and Greenberg. A well-known illustration of this influence is Rosalind Krauss' essay 'Richard Serra, a translation', where Krauss gives a sketch of how Merleau-Ponty's work informed the development of minimalist sculpture in the US, and where she shows how Richard Serra's own description of one of his sculptures, *Shift* (1970) sounds like an analysis of the phenomenology of perception.²⁰ This phenomenological turn, as Alex Potts calls it, maintains the relevance of the body in art, but the relevant embodiment here is *ours*, that is, that of the spectators. Such an approach shifts the site of the subject matter of the work of art, locating it in the interplay between work and audience, and it thereby entails rejecting the kind of work-based ontology of art that Hegel's theory represents.

However, there is yet another dimension to Merleau-Ponty's notion of the bodysubject that I am interested in and that I believe is particularly promising for thinking about the development of sculpture in the last century, offering an alternative to the modernism–minimalism dichotomy in recent art history. This dimension of the bodysubject might seem as the inverse of the intentionality and embodied mindedness extending into the world that is usually emphasised in treatments of Merleau-Ponty, and I refer to it as the body's anonymity or 'thingliness'. It is brought out by the fact that there is an ambiguity to the body, which consists in the bodysubject being both an in-itself and a for-itself as Merleau-Ponty characterises it, *both* a thing and a subject.

The ambiguity of the bodysubject is not easy to capture, since it is hard to think this twofoldness and it is rarely noticed in everyday experience. Instead, we usually grasp the body as one or the other: in so much of our skilful coping the body is inconspicuous; in normal situations when we go about our business the body is permeated by our agency and almost invisible to us. In breakdown situations on the other hand, or in the study of pathologies, the body becomes obstructive; it is approached as an object, from the outside. However, the ambiguity is

¹⁹ See Potts 2000, especially 207–234 (the sixth chapter, on 'The phenomenological turn').

²⁰ Krauss 1986, 261–276, esp. 264.

not captured by shifting between an internal and external experience of the body. Merleau-Ponty writes that ‘... as an object before thought, the body is not ambiguous. It only becomes ambiguous in the experience which we have of it, pre-eminently in sexual experience, and through the fact of sexuality’.²¹ What Merleau-Ponty is after is an ambiguity that is accessible from first personal experience and that is revealing of subjectivity itself. He insists the ambiguity is real, and hence not something that can be explained away, however tempting that might be.²² Instead, the experience calls for accepting our being both subjectivity and ‘stuff’ as simultaneous and not available to non-ambiguous conceptualisation.

What Merleau-Ponty points to in his analysis of sexual experience is how we in our sexual being become aware of ourselves as both subjectivity and ‘stuff’, and how the significance of the sexual experience is anchored in this anonymous existence. We can add to Merleau-Ponty’s claim that part of what makes the experience interesting and desirable is precisely that it brings out the ambiguity and makes our ‘thingliness’ not just an obtrusive fact or an obstacle to be overcome. This ‘thing’ that I am is not an *object*: it is still me, and I am body. When my body is embraced, I experience its depth, its self-enclosed thickness and the place it takes up in the world. An embrace is not merely a gesture that recognises one’s subjectivity, which could be equally well expressed in a sentence; the embrace is a recognition and appreciation of one’s bodily existence. When touched this way, I am made aware of and recognised as a being that is not merely intentionality or meaning or expressive existence, but also importantly *incarnated*. Here is how Merleau-Ponty describes this ambiguous dimension of embodiment:²³

Even when the subject is normal and engaged in inter-human situations, insofar as he has a body, he continuously preserves the power to withdraw from it. At the very moment when I live in the world, when I am directed toward my projects, my occupations, my friends, or my memories, I can close my eyes, lie down, listen to my blood pulsating in my ears, lose myself in some pleasure or pain, and lock myself up in this anonymous life that underpins my personal one.

21 Merleau-Ponty 2012, 206.

22 This is a central theme through the many different discussions in *Phenomenology of Perception* and the urge to disambiguate is what leads both archetypes of philosophical positions, the empiricist and intellectualist, astray.

23 Merleau-Ponty 2012, 203.

In other words, the bodysubject embodies the possibility of being ‘mere flesh and blood’ and this being is available to first personal experience. Merleau-Ponty also describes the body as ‘the possibility for my existence to resign from itself, to make itself anonymous and passive’.²⁴ In sexual experience we understand how this possibility of our existence can take on positive valence, even though it is a feature that mutes our subjectivity, making us one with the anonymous ‘stuff of the world’.

What follows from this description of ambiguity is that the notion of selfhood implicit in the phenomenology of the bodysubject is one that comes in degrees and can be more or less anonymous. It also means that to understand what a bodysubject *is* is to recognise the opacity and anonymity that is, if not at the heart of the matter, at least subtending and always a ‘modality’ of being a subject. Subjectivity is neither something that brings a corpse to life or forms the otherwise shapeless matter, nor something that sublates and leaves the body behind, but is made up of all these moments of the human, embodied being. The following quotation illustrates the complexity of human embodied being, with its moments of thingliness and intentionality, matter and consciousness. The context here is how we shift within the spectrum of possibilities of what it is to be a subject:²⁵

Even if I am absorbed in the experience of my body and in the solitude of sensations, I do not achieve a complete suppression of every reference to the world that is included in my life; at each moment some new intention springs forth from me, whether it be toward the objects that surround me and fall before my eyes, or toward the instants that arrive and push back into the past that I have just lived through. I never fully become an object in the world; the density of being of a thing is always lacking for me, my own substance always runs away from me through the inside, and some intention is always foreshadowed.

I now want to apply this phenomenological, first-personal account of the body to the understanding of sculpture. The phenomenology of the bodysubject shows that there is potential for developing the form that is ‘given’ to art by nature, beyond what had been the case by the time of Hegel. By developing the *form*, we can also expand our understanding of

²⁴ Merleau-Ponty 2012, 202.

²⁵ Merleau-Ponty 2012, 203 (translation modified).

what is implied by the artist's choice of the human body as a form, and of what an artistic treatment of the body is trying to do, that is, what the *subject matter* of a sculpture can be.

THE AMBIGUOUS BODY AS SCULPTURE'S FORM

On the phenomenological account, being human is an ambiguous existence that moves between the two poles of actualised, individual intentionality on the one hand, and a more minimal, anonymous being, on the other; between full-fledged, free subjectivity and a silent in-itself. The anonymous being stays with us and remains integral to the account of subjectivity. It is a constant modality and not something to be overcome. The body as a form in art would include the full scope of these possibilities, hence a phenomenological account of the body allows for a reevaluation of visual art, accepting Hegel's premise that the human body is central to these art forms. The next step is now to ask: How shall we relate phenomenology's body to our understanding of sculpture?

When it comes to the case of traditional representational sculpture, it seems that the account of the always intentionally directed bodysubject is a good description of the body in sculpture (and one that seems compatible with Hegel's own description of, for example, the sculpted body of a Greek god). When we perceive such a sculpture the pose is understood as the pose of an agent in an environment that offers affordances to which this pose responds; the carved muscles signal readiness to move and act in a space that is imbued with meaning. We perceive embodied subjects and not merely 'body objects' in isolation, nor symbols of interiority or consciousness, which would be the contrasting models for understanding the body.

The insistence on the ambiguity of the body emphasises that a dimension of the bodysubject is beyond the linguistic – more thing than subject proper – and hence a physical art form such as sculpture might be particularly well-suited to capture it. However, in order to do so, features of embodiment that are primarily first personal, that are characterised by depth, opacity and a sense of resting in itself, need to find an expression through the forming of three-dimensional material. To bring out this anonymous dimension in sculpture, we need a body that is formed in a manner that seems quite alien to the Greek ideal: instead of all the parts coming together in a manner that forms a beautiful unity, the embodied subject might be best portrayed as dissolving, as having vague boundaries, and/or in a material that can almost appear unformed.

During the very same period when sculptures like those of Anthony Caro and David Smith were hailed as purely exploring vector space, a variety of very different abstract sculptural works were also made, works that I will suggest as candidates for capturing the ambiguous experience of embodiment. One example is Louise Bourgeois' *End of Softness* of 1967 [Fig. 10.3], a work whose crumpled, almost crawling, surface gives an experience of inaccessible enclosed-ness despite the shiny surface of its material.

It is difficult to articulate what the work *looks like*, exactly: its shape is not easily available to conceptualisation, in other words, but the work seems to invite a reaction that is felt, even if hard to discursively express. The form cannot quite be captured visually, but is experienced as organic and almost moving. I would venture that this sculpture gives an outward expression to an experience the viewer can recognise as having felt, inside. In other words, the sculpture captures a first-personal experience of embodiment. Bourgeois continues to explore the depth and opacity of bodies, sculpted or lived, in works such as *Germinal* (1967) [Fig. 10.4], *Cumul I* (1968) [Fig. 10.5] and as well as in her many upright, oblong figures that look like an amalgam of shuttles, torsos and female genitalia (see for example *Woman in the Shape of a Shuttle* (1947–1949), *Pillar* (1949) and the *Echo*-series (2007)).

Seen in the light of Bourgeois' vast *œuvre*, these sculptures are bordering on abstract objects, but they still have clear reference to the human body. Compared with her later cells and other installation and assemblage pieces, they are more like traditional sculptures, understood as self-contained, unified works. Hence, they are analogous to bodysubjects, in their more minimal, anonymous modality. Further characteristics of the ambiguous body, as described in the previous section on Merleau-Ponty's body, seem fitting to other works by some of Bourgeois' contemporaries: density, fluidity and opacity are characteristic of Lynda Benglis' *Wing* (1970) [Fig. 10.6].²⁶

Of course, none of the mentioned works literally look like the human body. However, my suggestion is that the features that I have pointed to are features of embodiment.²⁷ They do not mimic the external look of the human form, but we recognise them as features of our own embodied existence that Merleau-Ponty brought attention to when trying to describe

26 Folds, fleshiness and inaccessible form likewise characterise Hanna Wilke's *Untitled I* (1970).

27 In 2007, Cheim & Read Gallery in New York had a show of sculptures by Bourgeois and Benglis, describing the work in the following way in their press release: "Both artists created organically shaped, often grotesque amorphous



10.3 Louise Bourgeois, *End of Softness*, 1967 (17.8 × 51.8 × 38.7 cm).
Bronze with gold patina. Owned by the Easton Foundation.
© The Easton Foundation / VAGA, New York / BONO, Oslo 2017;
photograph by Christopher Burke. Reproduced in colour as Plate 14.

forms. Both reference the undulating, layered landscape of the body and its private, internal anatomy while connecting to the ripe fecundity of the natural world, and the earth's own internal brewing and bubbling'.



10.4 Louise Bourgeois, *Germinal*, 1967 (14.3 × 18.7 × 15.9 cm). Marble. Owned by the Easton Foundation. © The Easton Foundation / VAGA, New York / BONO, Oslo 2017; photograph by Allan Finkelman. Reproduced in colour as Plate 15.



10.5 Louise Bourgeois, *Cumul I*, 1968 (51 × 127 × 122 cm). Marble, with wooden base. Paris: Centre Pompidou. © The Easton Foundation / VAGA, New York / BONO, Oslo 2017.

the mute, thingly dimension of our embodiment. Facing these works is analogous to the experience of a body where the intentional subjectivity has withdrawn and we are instead witnessing ‘this anonymous life that underpins my personal one’.²⁸ What we face are beings more like us than ‘the mere objects’ of minimalism or the visually appealing structures of the formalist sculptures of high modernism.²⁹ And as with bodysubjects, these sculpted bodies cannot but help to hint at gesturing – ‘the density of being a thing is always lacking ... and some intention is always foreshadowed’.³⁰

28 Merleau-Ponty 2012, 203.

29 Contrasting Bourgeois with Minimalism, Potts writes: ‘there is in her case no lingering unease that the integrity of the work might be compromised by the use of striking body images, or by creating a situation where a powerful psychic or affective charge takes over a viewer’s response’ (Potts 2000, 361).

30 Merleau-Ponty 2012, 203.



10.6 Lynda Benglis, *Wing*, 1970 (170.2 × 150.5 × 152.4 cm).
 Cast aluminum. New Orleans: New Orleans Museum of Art.
 © Lynda Benglis / VAGA, New York / BONO, Oslo 2017.

Someone might object, noticing that all the examples I have suggested are by women artists, that what these works have in common is representation of female bodies or, perhaps, that the works would be best understood as making some feminist point about bodies. This line of interpretation could be thought of as taking up another aspect of Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the bodysubject, for example, how social identities – here, women's identities specifically – are embodied, and how a bodyschema might be gendered. However, the mere fact that the artists are female does not mean that the works have to do with femininity or feminism. Instead, the works at hand are varied and abstract enough that it seems forced to say that they are about femininity rather than about sculpted objects and embodiment

more generally.³¹ The shared features of many works by women artists from this period may imply, rather, that these women were especially attuned to subject matter of ambiguous embodiment and recognised it as more pressing or relevant [e.g. Fig. 10.7].³²

If this extended, phenomenological conception of the body is part of the *form* of sculpture, then what kind of *subject matter* does it allow the work to engage? Since the minimal dimension of embodiment is precisely characterised by withdrawal from the social world and resisting intentionality, agency and freedom, Hegel would say that it really cannot convey much about Spirit. And, in a sense, he is right – these are not sculptures that we can easily say are rich in discursively available content. If we accept that these works are bodies, in a wide sense, then their subject matter is neither freedom, agency, nor social identity, and precisely this negative point could be said to be part of what is thematised. What art that presents these kinds of bodies *can* do is to insist on this anonymous dimension of embodiment by trying to express it, and thereby making this aspect of embodiment its subject matter.

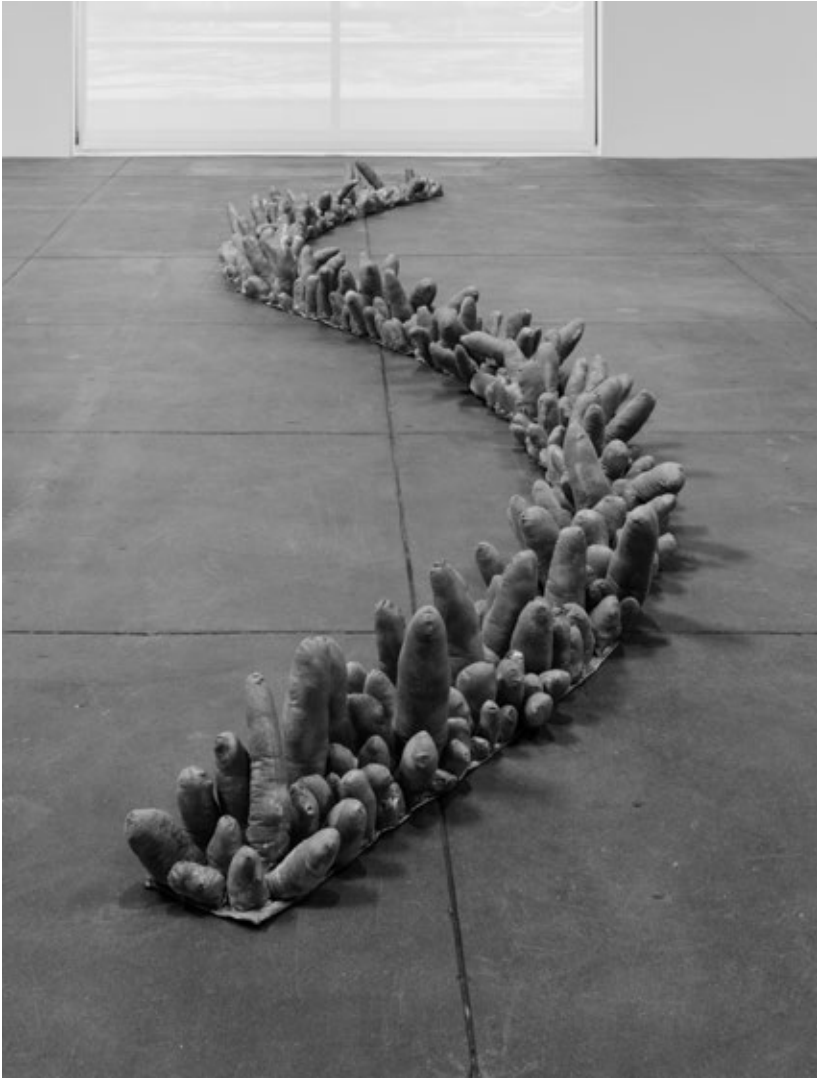
As mentioned at the outset, Hegel is no dualist and also recognises that being a body is part of the human, and one might argue that Hegel's account of human subjectivity has room for the insights of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body.³³ Terry Pinkard likens the fluency and seamlessness of the being-in-the-world of Merleau-Ponty's bodysubject to Hegel's description of the subjectivity characteristic of animal life, which involves 'a prior form of self-acquaintance that, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, is that of a "subject-object," a body perceived from the "inside" of subjective quasi animal awareness that projects outwards its intention to act in the world'.³⁴ This kind of self-acquaintance

31 Potts notes how there has been a 'regendering of the persona of the sculptor ... it [nowadays] makes little sense to ask whether certain forms of sculpture or three-dimensional art should be seen as distinctively feminine or masculine' (Potts 2000, 357). Potts concludes his big work on sculpture with Bourgeois and sees her work as coinciding with this change in both the practice and the perception of sculpture.

32 Other artists from the same period whose work could be said to express the ambiguity of embodiment or the coming to be of gesture out of the anonymity of the body include Yayoi Kusama [cf. Fig. 10.7] and Eva Hesse, but also some of the works by male artists such as Isamu Noguchi and Eduardo Chillida. (For none of the mentioned artists do I claim that *all* of their works are best understood thus.)

33 I am grateful to T.J. Clark for pressing me on this point.

34 Pinkard 2012, 26.



10.7 Yayoi Kusama, *Snake*, 1974 (30.5 × 650.2 × 25.4 cm). Mixed media. Private collection, © Yayoi Kusama. Reproduced in colour as Plate 16.



10.8 Detail of Yayoi Kusama, *Snake*, 1974 (30.5 × 650.2 × 25.4 cm). Mixed media. Private collection, © Yayoi Kusama.

is a moment in Hegel's account of human self-consciousness. In other words, there is no necessary contradiction between Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the bodysubject and Hegel's account of human being. However, in the *Aesthetics*, the systematic picture is accompanied by a historical one, and the latter appears very explicitly to deny any lasting relevance of the body in art, as if understanding ourselves as ambiguous really would amount to a lack of self-knowledge, or at best a provisional knowledge, that has since been superseded. Hegel contends that contemporary culture 'produces this opposition in man which makes him an amphibious animal, because he now has to live in two worlds which contradict one another', but the cure for such a situation is not appreciating one's amphibiousness as the ambiguity of subjectivity; rather, it must be reconciled.³⁵ Put otherwise, returning to insist on the importance of animal life in us, in the way my interpretation suggests some modern sculptures do, is regressive.

Further, this art, as I have characterised it, accepts as relevant an experience of opacity. What has been introduced into the subject matter

³⁵ Hegel 1975, 54.

of art, then, is something that is not fully accessible to thought, and this subject matter should perhaps even be understood as an outright rejection of the possibility of self-knowledge, if that means becoming completely transparent and intelligible to ourselves. This would be a most un-Hegelian admission and could be understood as reintroducing the sublime as relevant in late modern art, if we think of the sublime as naming something that overwhelms and goes beyond our cognitive capacities.³⁶ This is something Hegel would understand as a regression, since sublimity in art is a symptom of an inability to express and hence make clear one's subject matter.³⁷ As Pippin puts this point, contrasting Hegel's outlook with that of phenomenology:³⁸

To be is to be intelligible; there *cannot* be anything in principle unknowable. (The failure of meaning is therefore, for Hegel, always itself determinately comprehensible, for a historical society, at a time, in a certain relation to its own past).

The phenomenological account, on the other hand, suggests that what we are dealing with is not a provisional vagueness, but a perennial 'darkness' in our very being.

CONCLUSION

Consider the following passage from Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* as a literary example of attempting to capture the range of the embodied self:³⁹

36 The sublime is a notoriously vague term in art theory, but in the case of Merleau-Ponty's bodysubject and the sculptures discussed it seems to be understood best as something inaccessible to cognition, a self-contained core that gives a sense of depth or weight to the body.

37 Hegel 1975, 482–483: '... what alone has the look of the sublime is the abstract universal which never coincides with itself in anything determinate ...'. On Hegel's view of the sublime, see Pippin 2005, 294: 'Hegel regarded the experience of the sublime as historically regressive, an indication of a much less well developed understanding of "the divine" ...'.

38 Pippin 2014, 130.

39 Woolf 1964, 72.

... it was a relief when they [the others] went to bed. For now she need not think about anybody. She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need of – to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others. Although she continued to knit, and sat upright, it was thus that she felt herself.

On my Merleau-Ponty-inspired reading, the experience of oneself as ‘a wedge-shaped core of darkness’ is not due to some temporary inability of self-knowledge on the part of Woolf’s heroine, perhaps due to shortcomings in her ability to be at one with her ‘expansive being and doing’, intensified by her social situation. Instead, I would venture that what it is to be oneself, any self, *is* also opaque and ‘dense’ in the manner described.⁴⁰

If, by pointing to ‘a wedge-shaped core of darkness,’ or giving expression to the opacity and depth that is part of our being, this ‘unthought’ dimension of the ambiguous body becomes a content of art, as I am suggesting, then it is clear that these artworks are quite far from what Hegel imagined as art’s task, with respect to what it is we need art to make manifest for us. What these works offer their audiences are not the most complex or modern configurations of freedom and Spirit, but an enduring feature of our being, the anonymous or dark matter that remains part of who we are. If we accept these works as relevant (and not merely as detours or misunderstandings) and if we accept that their form and subject matter are suitably understood along the lines I have suggested, then this implies that things have developed fairly differently from what Hegel imagined 200 years ago, or more precisely, that a different form, subject matter and hence different history of sculptural art after Hegel is possible.

One of the strengths of Hegel’s aesthetics is that it aims to give a story of why art is important, that is, why it conveys an important subject matter in a fitting form at a given point in history. This is an ambitious criterion for a theory, but it is also one that can justify art as deeply significant and an occasion for truth. This criterion, that it should be possible to articulate why art answers a general need (as opposed to a merely

⁴⁰ Galen Strawson reads this passage in a similar manner, although in a different context, arguing against a narrative theory of the self: Strawson 2012.

aesthetic or art-intrinsic need), is necessary to explain the artist's choice as embodying relevant content for us in our time. If my phenomenological alternative is to live up to this criterion of Hegelian theory, it should be able to give an account of *why* these sculptural works represent a choice and a way to sculpt that is of significance now (in a wide conception of 'now' that spans the last hundred years). It would take some work to fully develop an answer to why it is historically pertinent to try to express aesthetically this ambiguity of embodiment as a feature of human existence, but here are a few suggestions:

1. It might be that an overly theoretical approach to our self-understanding has come to be felt as falling short and sculpture functions as a kind of corrective.
2. Or it might be that these bodily works occasion an appreciation of the preconditions for our own psychological and social identities, that is, of aspects of our being that are more basic.
3. Or a certain humility might be needed in our time, and sculpture reminds us of our embodied limitations.
4. Or these works might convey a recognition of our belonging to nature in a conception of nature where it is not fully captured by our best empirical science.
5. Or they might answer some existential need to see externalised that depth and darkness that we know from inside ourselves.

I take it that these are all plausible possible ways of trying to articulate the importance of bodily ambiguity as subject matter for art in our time. They are not mutually exclusive, so it may even be that two or more of them in combination might provide the historically relevant justification. My point is not to defend any one of them, or indeed any combination, but rather simply to show that the bodies at work in these sculptures can be given an interpretation, in which they, precisely because of their ambiguity, express something important for and about human beings. A common feature of my brief interpretations of these works is that they are *resisting* a certain kind of intelligibility and insisting on the importance of making thematic a dimension of ourselves that is barely available to the language of philosophy. Before the advent of modernism, this aspect of human existence is neither familiar from visual art nor from theoretical treatments. But it just might be that this is most needed for understanding ourselves. By re-evaluating the body, we can understand late modern sculpture as able to address other questions than the more

familiar modernist narrative about abstraction and autonomy and thereby we are also able to tell a different history about modernism, in which other works become paradigmatic.

In sum, turning to phenomenology's re-evaluation of the body allows for a re-evaluation of sculpture, since the form has a different potential and hence lends itself to a different subject matter than what Hegel imagined. If we inscribe this alternative account of late modern sculpture in a Hegelian narrative, which recognises the need for making the ambiguity of human selfhood manifest for us, then choosing the body as form can be understood not as a mere continuation of a tradition of sculpture that is basically less significant, if not antiquated, but rather as a historically relevant artistic choice that makes it possible to express something important and true about who we are – we who are still embodied creatures, stuck with the ambiguities of our amphibian nature.

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SEBASTIAN GARDNER

ART'S LOSS OF VOCATION

Hegel and Philosophical Romanticism

What follows examines Hegel's disagreement with other post-Kantians concerning the philosophical significance of art. The contemporaries with whom I take Hegel to be arguing include all of those who accord to art the kind of unbounded cognitive significance denied it by Hegel's thesis that art has lost its highest vocation – thus, in the first instance the Jena Romantics, Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel, whom he attacks with uncharacteristic vehemence; in addition Schiller, Schelling and Solger, who are also criticised, albeit in more moderate terms, by Hegel; and by implication also, though Hegel does not talk about them in the relevant respect, Hölderlin, Schleiermacher and Victor Cousin.¹ For convenience, using a

1 I include Schiller, although he figures somewhat uncertainly in Hegel's discussion. One complication is that though Schiller certainly affirms a future for art that Hegel rejects, it lies in moral psychology and its political correlates, not in metaphysical knowledge. What Hegel might have been expected to claim therefore is, first, that the historical vision and political problematic of Schiller's *Letters* is overtaken in his *Philosophy of Right*, and, second, that Schiller's aesthetics are defective in so far as he, like Kant, allows beauty to remain a mere non-actual *Ought*, bereft of *Is*-ness. Yet what Hegel says in the Introduction of the *Aesthetics* is that Schiller grasps in a philosophically superior way the unity that Kant intimates – 'This *unity* of universal and particular, freedom and necessity, Spirit and nature, which Schiller grasped scientifically as the principle and essence of art and which he laboured unremittingly to call into actual life by art and aesthetic education [...]' (1975, 62 [1970, XIII: 91]). Hegel however does not tell what makes Schiller's achievement notably scientific (nor what differentiates him from Schelling, who may presumably be credited with the same achievement). That Schiller does not truly break through into

term which has gained currency and is particularly apt in the context of Hegel, I will refer to this standpoint as ‘Philosophical Romanticism’.²

The opposition of Hegel *qua* alleged hyper-rationalist to Romantic non- or anti-rationalism is a canonical reference point in philosophical discourse. My engagement with it here focuses narrowly on the question of Hegel’s success, or not, in establishing his loss-of-vocation thesis. What I will seek to show, through rational reconstruction of the historical disagreement, is the thinness of Hegel’s self-distinction from his Romantic contemporaries; which may be thought to give ground either for (re)claiming Hegel as a Romantic *malgré lui*, or alternatively for rewriting the Hegelian art-narrative in such a way as to dissociate him cleanly from the Romantic standpoint.

THE PUZZLE POSED BY HEGEL’S THESIS

The general notion that art possesses a special cognitive capacity, overtaking natural consciousness and capable of rising to metaphysical heights, takes hugely different forms in the tradition stretching down from classical German philosophy to the present, and the sort of basis offered for it varies greatly, but it recurs again and again in late modern philosophy,³ and in this long perspective, Hegel clearly occupies a singular place, both lending his weight to the tradition and, it would seem, seeking to extinguish it pre-emptively. The puzzle is how Hegel can seemingly want to have it both ways. I will suggest that, although Hegel’s thesis concerning art’s loss of vocation undeniably has force – it mandates certain expectations and invalidates others – the justification he offers for it turns out on close examination to rest on a relatively fine point concerning what counts

the speculative and falls victim to aestheticism is confirmed by Hegel’s later discussion of Schiller’s ‘Die Götter Griechenlands’ (1975, 506–507 [1970, XIV: 113–114]): Schiller is described as merely straining against the *aufgeklärten Verstand* and as led to art, and to the Greeks, by his feeling of the unfulfilled need of Reason. Schiller receives no treatment in Hegel’s *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.

2 Which is not to say that my usage corresponds neatly with that of others. The lines of division between pro- and anti-Romantics are various and intricate: compare, e.g., Geuss 2005 (especially chapters 11–12), and Eldridge 2001 (especially the introduction).

3 For an overview, see Gardner 2007.

as an adequate comprehension of spirit in its relation to sense; and that once this has been appreciated, and once appropriate distinctions have also been drawn among the contemporaries with whom he is arguing, it becomes unclear why Hegel's position on art should be regarded (why he himself should have regarded it) as deeply differentiated from that of (at least some of) his Romantic contemporaries. After having explained how one might arrive at this conclusion, which will take up most of the space available, I will point briefly to one respect in which the subsequent history of art may be thought to cohere with this assessment.

The topic is of course bound up with several large issues, including (first) the place of art in Hegel's system; (second) the exact meaning of Hegel's declaration that art has lost its highest vocation; and (third) Hegel's general metaphysical philosophical disagreements with Schlegel, Schelling and others in the Philosophical Romantic camp. So let me first say something quickly about each of these.

Regarding the place of art, the point to be highlighted is that art appears to undergo a different fate and to play a different kind of role in Hegel's system from that played by other, comparable items. The highest form of Objective Spirit, and the penultimate form of Absolute Spirit – respectively the world-history of states, and revealed religion – continue to maintain themselves intact as they undergo their concluding transition, without reacting back on themselves. There is no final form of religious consciousness that shares the structure of late romantic art, since the insight that spirit is incompletely grasped in revealed religion does not induce it to retract its claim to truth. And the ultimate limitation of Objective Spirit – that it leaves spirit still in need of comprehension of its own absoluteness – does not lead modern social life to pass over into a new form, or manifest itself as a new moment in universal history. By contrast, art is envisaged, not quite as a ladder to be used and thrown away, but at any rate as incorporating within itself, in the full development of its romantic form, recognition of its own failure to reach as far as it intends – whence its 'collapse', *Zerfallen*.⁴

4 The classical undergoes 'dissolution [*Auflösung*]' (Hegel 1975, 502 [Hegel 1970, XIV: 107]), as does the romantic. But the latter's dissolution is followed by 'the collapse of romantic art [*das Zerfallen der romantischen Kunst*]' (Hegel 1975, 595 [Hegel 1970, XIV: 222]) and 'the decay and dissolution of art itself [*Zerfallenheit und Auflösung der Kunst selbst*]' (Hegel 1975, 576 [Hegel 1970, XIV: 198]), in which 'the sides, whose complete identity affords the proper essence of art', fall apart (Hegel 1975, 576 [Hegel 1970, XIV: 198]).

If we take Hegel not to be offering mere heuristic schemas, but as tracking the self-thinking of art, religion and so on, then the explanation cannot simply be that transitions in Hegel are not all uniform. The question, then, is whether there is any internal *systematic* reason why the fate of art should differ in this respect from that of socio-political life and revealed religion, and the answer is not to be found at the surface of Hegel's texts.

Since much discussion of the loss-of-vocation thesis holds aside or assigns a minor role to his argument with Philosophical Romanticism, it is worth spelling out the reasons for regarding it as the focal point. To interpret art's loss of vocation as having anti-Romantic significance is to map Hegel's treatment of art directly onto his high-level claim concerning the necessarily all-comprehensive or 'infinite' character of the Concept – the claim which Schelling in the 1830s and 1840s, and later thinkers influenced by him, attack head on.⁵ Separating them, by contrast, makes Hegel's thesis harder to understand. As has become clear in recent discussion,⁶ the loss of vocation involves not one but several ideas. These include: the inferior beauty of post-classical art; art's loss of social authority and its looser integration with ethical life; the unavoidable internal complexity of the modern artwork; modern art's domination by subjective humour; the objective arbitrariness of content consequent upon the modern artist's new subjective freedom vis à vis content; and valorisation of the contingent everyday world.

It is not difficult to recognise these as a collection of convergent and perhaps mutually reinforcing claims concerning the distinguishing features and predicament of modern art. What is not so clear – if Philosophical Romanticism is not Hegel's target – is why they should be taken to point collectively towards the lesson that art has lost its highest vocation. Hence my suggestion that, if Hegel's thesis is to be sustained as a distinct further

5 Indeed Schelling cites Hegel's loss-of-vocation thesis in his late writings as evidence of Hegel's narrow rationalism: Schelling 1994 [1833–1837], 128–129 and 135–136 [Schlegel 1991, X: 119 and 127–128], and 1972 [1832–1833], 234–235. That said, Schelling ultimately agrees with Hegel, more or less, concerning art's loss of vocation, for reasons which overlap with Hegel's: 1) the unsurpassability of Greek art; 2) the contingency of modern art's content; and 3) the surpassing of art by Christian religion. See Schelling 2007, 166–169 [Schlegel 1991, XI: 241–242].

6 See Henrich 2003a; Rush 2010; Houlgate 2013; and Peters 2015 (especially the sixth chapter). Henrich 2003b, 157, distinguishes Hegel's claim that art has as a matter of fact come to an end from his justificatory claim regarding its future potential.

systematic claim within the philosophy of art in its own right, and not resolved back into the several more determinate claims just mentioned, then it should be understood as asserting the point in the development of spirit at which certain competing, aestheticist forms of post-Kantianism are seen off.

Since little would be gained for our understanding of Hegel's philosophy of art by merely rehearsing the case of Schelling and other critics against the hegemony of the Concept, and the replies available to Hegel, it makes sense to ask if there is some other way in which their disagreement concerning art might be pursued, which will avoid reducing it to the purely general metaphysical issue. One obvious suggestion is that we should ask instead to what extent Hegel's account of modern art accords with the way in which it has as a matter of fact attempted to understand itself – the idea being that, even if Hegel were to be allowed to have settled the pure metaphysical issues, it remains possible that there are aspects of modern art's self-understanding for which Philosophical Romanticism provides a superior articulation. Even if this is, as I will argue, what the historical record shows, it cannot be concluded without further ado that Hegel is simply wrong about art's loss of vocation, since the option remains of construing his theory as essentially revisionary, as a critique of modern art-consciousness or tendencies within it, and perhaps also as an occasion for attempting to extend the Hegelian narrative in a way that will explain the persistence of Romanticism. Nonetheless, any such result would hold considerable interest.

FROM KANT TO PHILOSOPHICAL ROMANTICISM

To turn now to the main issue – Hegel's justification for declaring that art has lost its vocation – it will help to rehearse quickly some of the leading formulations of the Philosophical Romantic position that Hegel is rejecting, in order to get an accurate measure of what Hegel needs to establish in relation to his contemporaries.

The natural place to start is with Kant's analysis of art, which is pre-Romantic but provides the prototype for much of the theorising that follows.⁷ In Kant's account, a work of fine art is a composite in which a sensory presentation, in addition to meeting the condition of beauty by

⁷ Key passages are Kant 2000 [1790], §59, 225–228 (V: 351–355), on symbolic presentation; and §49, 191–195 (V: 313–317), and §57 Remark I, 217–219 (V: 341–344), on aesthetic and rational ideas.

virtue of its form, also (as he puts it) ‘occasions much thinking’, and by virtue of its indefinite suggestive power, and the impossibility of bringing the thinking that it elicits to any conclusion, points onwards to the supersensible. The two components of the work are therefore (i) what Kant calls an ‘aesthetic idea’, that is, the sensory product of the imagination, working in association with concepts of the understanding; and (ii) an idea of the supersensible or unconditioned, or Idea of Reason, typically a moral idea. The two are aligned in such a way that the former *expresses* the latter. What the sensory presentation relays, therefore is strictly speaking a mere idea, and not its object. The manner in which it does so – that is, the way it makes virtue, justice or whatever apparently present to us, and gives it life – is not something that can be grasped discursively. (Which is another reason, in addition to beauty, why fine art presupposes genius.) It follows that ‘[a]n aesthetic idea cannot become a cognition’,⁸ just as an Idea of Reason cannot be supplied with a corresponding cognised object.

Kant’s conception of fine art is bound up therefore with his view of the limits of philosophical cognition, without which fine art would lack all interest (just as beauty would be impossible): aesthetic presentations are a further part of the large Kantian package of things that we have to make do with, given that we have no insight into any real connection of nature with the supersensible. When, however, this general Kantian claim comes to be challenged by the following generation, aesthetic presentation, far from being discarded, gains in importance, and Kant’s reasoning is in effect put in reverse: the possibility and actuality of aesthetic presentation is taken as a positive ground for thinking that the bounds of human cognition cannot lie where Kant supposes.

In its initial phase, this redevelopment takes two forms. The pre-eminent systematic formulation is Schelling’s well-known account, in his 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*, of the work of art as the objectification of intellectual intuition or intuitive intellection – the mode of cognition which Kant says we cannot have. Whereas Kant envisages the sensory component of the work of art as a would-be window on to the supersensible which we can think-but-not-know, Schelling’s claim is that the work of art displays to us their *actual* point of union; the work is an object, of a singular sort, accessible to the subject, and which displays the real unity of the sensible and supersensible, and nature and freedom.

⁸ Kant 2000 [1790], 218 (V: 342).

The other systematic formulation is the Jena Romantics' reconception of art in terms of the specific kind of *negative* aesthetic presentation which Kant introduces in the context of the sublime.⁹ The Jena Romantics invert Kant's reasoning: what he regards as a mere shortfall in the power of sense to 'present' the unconditioned, they argue, is just what allows it to qualify as a positive, higher cognition.¹⁰

Abstracting from all the details, the idea common to the Jena Romantics and Schelling in 1800 is that works of art project a content or cognitive meaning, of a kind which discursive thought can recover once it has been made available by the artwork, but which could not have been originally secured by discursive means, and which cannot be validated discursively without reference back to the (experience of the) artwork. Hence Schelling's claim:¹¹

If aesthetic intuition is merely transcendental intuition become objective, it is self-evident that art is at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy, which ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form [...] Art is paramount to the philosopher [*Die Kunst ist eben deßwegen dem Philosophen das Höchste*].

Hegel of course rejects this. And he *also* rejects the distinct, weaker version of Philosophical Romanticism – which belongs to its second phase – according to which the cognitive achievement of art can be matched by philosophy *without* being superseded. This is Schelling's position in his later (1803–1804) lectures on the philosophy of art. Schelling arrives at it, not by weakening his claims for art, but by strengthening his claims for philosophy. This is the work of what he calls his Identity Philosophy, which provides the outlines for Hegel's own version of absolute idealism. Schelling now describes his system in its entirety as an 'ideal-realism which has become objective' [*objektiv-gewordener Idealrealismus*], which

⁹ Kant 2000 [1790], General Remark, 149–157 [V: 266–275].

¹⁰ I emphasise that this is a selective reconstruction, which picks out only *one* of the several conceptions of art found in Novalis and Schlegel (between whom there are also important differences). An exegetically intricate issue surrounds the correct understanding of Early German Romantic claims regarding the absolute; see Nassar 2013.

¹¹ Schelling 1978 [1800], 231 [Schlegel 1991, III: 627–628].

is nothing other than a *System der Kunst*.¹² Equality of art and philosophy – each taken as a different medium for presenting the relation of the world to the absolute – is also (with some complications) Solger’s position,¹³ and (perhaps) that of Goethe.¹⁴ It surfaces too, in a different version, in Schopenhauer, though he is not on Hegel’s horizon.

To make clear that there are indeed quite different ways in which Hegel’s Romantic contemporaries enter a claim for the significance for art which Hegel contradicts, here are some quotations, the first from Schelling’s lectures on the philosophy of art:¹⁵

We must remind ourselves here that *the philosophy of art is actually general philosophy itself, except presented in the potency of art*. Thus we will understand the way in which art lends objectivity to its own ideas in the same way we understand how the ideas of individual real things become objective in the phenomenal realm. Or we might put it thus: our present task, which is to understand the transition of the aesthetic idea into the concrete work of art, is the same as the general task of philosophy as such, namely, to understand the manifestation of the ideas through particular things.

The section from which this comes deals with the question of how the ‘universal content’ of art becomes ‘the true material of a particular work of art’,¹⁶ and Schelling goes on to explain how the various fundamental antitheses – universal and particular, and so on – which form antinomies for our ordinary understanding, are resolved within art in the same way as within philosophical reflection, namely through the location of the so-called ‘point of indifference’ between them. The artist is therefore engaged on solving philosophical problems, albeit not under that description: as Schelling puts it, the ‘artist of genius is autonomous’, ‘subject to no law but his own’, and philosophy comes to recognise this, because

12 In *Über den wahren Begriff der Naturphilosophie* (1801) [Schlegel 1991, IV: 86, 89 and 92].

13 Solger tends to blur art and revealed religion, and has variable views about their relation to philosophical cognition.

14 On the strength of some of his remarks about symbolism and the expression of concepts in images.

15 Schelling 1989 [1802–1804], 98 [Schlegel 1991, V: 480]; emphasis added.

16 Schelling 1989 [1802–1804], Part I, chapter 3.

it too operates according to the highest principle of autonomy.¹⁷ Earlier Schelling claimed to find in art what he found missing from philosophy; now his claim is that philosophy, precisely because it can satisfy its own needs, is able to behold its mirror image when it looks at art.

We find another, succinct statement of the idea of a strict parallelism of art with philosophical reflection, such that both exhibit one and the same form, in Fichte (even if the idea is not one to which he himself attached much importance):¹⁸

[O]ne cannot express what fine art does in any better way than by saying that *it makes the transcendental point of view the ordinary point of view*. — The philosopher elevates himself and others to this point of view by means of work and in accordance with a rule. [...] [F]rom the transcendental point of view, the world is something that is made; from the ordinary point of view, it is something that is given; from the aesthetic point of view, the world is given, but only under the aspect of how it was made.

Compare these statements from Schelling and Fichte with the following, derived from a passage in Novalis' *Fichte Studies* (1795–1796):¹⁹

Philosophy is originally a feeling. The philosophical sciences conceptualise the intuitions of this feeling [...] Thus philosophy always needs *something given* — it is {merely} *form* [...] Philosophy does not admit of construction. The borders of feeling are the borders of philosophy. Feeling cannot feel itself.

It is easy to see how — with the motive of equipping feeling with the means to 'feel itself', and so of overcoming its borders, or of showing these to be, in Kant's language, only borders [*Grenzen*] and not limits [*Schranken*] — one might advance from this point to Schlegel's provocative statement that, 'Where philosophy stops, poetry has to begin';²⁰ and thence perhaps

17 Schelling 1966 [1803], 148 [Schlegel 1991, V: 349].

18 Fichte 2005 [1798], 334. The same idea is employed by Schopenhauer in *The World as Will and Representation*.

19 Novalis 2003 [1795–1796], 13. Novalis' journals would not of course have been known to Hegel, but the line of thought encapsulated here is repeated throughout Early German Romantic writing.

20 Schlegel 1991 [1800], 98.

one further step, to Schlegel's conception of irony as an all-subsuming principle which gives appropriate recognition to reflection's dependence on feeling and other limitations.

The point, therefore, is that in Novalis and Schlegel the case 'against philosophy' is built into the case 'for art': the fortunes of art rise, as and *because* those of philosophy decline. For Schelling and Fichte, by contrast, philosophy comes to recognise that the knowledge that it has gained by hard discursive work was present all along, in a different form, in art. It is clear that the former presents Hegel squarely with a target that would motivate his loss-of-vocation claim, but whether this is also true of the latter remains to be seen.

To recapitulate, four positions are in play: (i) Kant's position that art does not qualify as philosophical cognition in any genuine sense (its real importance is moral); (ii) the strong aestheticist claim for art's cognitive superiority and the dependence of philosophy on art (Schelling in 1800 and the Jena Romantics); (iii) the weaker claim that art's cognition is self-standing and equalled, but not surpassed, by philosophical reflection (that is, Schelling in 1803–1804, Fichte, Solger, Schopenhauer); and finally (iv) Hegel's claim for philosophy's transcendence of art's cognition. And to each of these a different conception of the work of art corresponds: (i) as mere symbolisation of an *Idea* of the unconditioned; (ii) as an objectified intellectual intuition or as in some other way achieving the positive cognition of the unconditioned unavailable to philosophy; (iii) as paralleling philosophical cognition, providing a different mode of presentation of the same content; and (iv) Hegel's conception of the late romantic form of art as aware of having lost its highest vocation, which is what must be considered next.

HEGEL'S CONCEPTION OF THE LATE ROMANTIC WORK OF ART

Kant's and Hegel's aesthetics are standardly presented as forming a stark contrast,²¹ but if we compare their conceptions of fine art with respect to their structure, the basic similarity is striking. This is what Hegel's remarks

21 With respect to art, Kant's horizons are set by neoclassicism; the works that he considers exemplary (Milton) look backwards rather than forward; *Sturm und Drang* represents in his eyes a threat; and the overall shape of art is static and fixed by nature and morality, which anchor it and supply all of its content.

on Kant's aesthetic theory lead us to expect.²² In the introduction to the lectures, under the heading 'Historical Deduction of the Concept of Art', Hegel goes patiently through the Four Moments of Kant's Analytic of the Pure Judgment of Taste, saying of them that they express the unity required by the 'absoluteness of reason': the beautiful work of art 'cancels' the 'cleavages' of freedom and nature, universal and particular, understanding and sense, and concept and reality. The Kantian work of art does a better job than Kantian theoretical and practical cognition, according to Hegel, because within it sense is neither 'subsumed' nor 'dominated' by freedom: 'Therefore thought is incarnate in the beauty of art [...] the material is not determined by thought externally, but exists freely on its own account [...] nature and freedom, sense and concept, find their right and satisfaction all in one.'²³ The flaw in this 'apparently perfect reconciliation' Hegel locates not *within* Kant's account of the structure of fine art but in the philosophical gloss that Kant puts on it, that is, the *status* that Kant claims for the work of art. This, along with everything else pertaining to Kant's attempt to unify reason, is inadequately defined by Kant as merely subjective, 'the point of view of a reflection which judges' only 'subjectively'. Kant has supplied nonetheless 'the starting point' for 'the true comprehension of the beauty of art': it remains for us, Hegel says, to achieve a 'higher grasp of the true unity of necessity and freedom, particular and universal, sense and reason'. Again, the fundamental correction needed to Kant's aesthetic theory lies not directly within the philosophy of art, but in general metaphysics.

Now of course achieving this 'higher grasp' – through general metaphysics – brings vast changes in its wake, including art's whole historicisation, but thus far Hegel's trajectory seems indistinguishable in terms of its general outline and *qua* strategy from that of Romantic post-Kantian aesthetic theory. Hegel substitutes pure conceptual thinking for Kant's Ideas of Reason, thereby supplying the unconditioned as presented in beautiful art with full reality; and he disposes of Kant's fundamental dualism of sense and intellect, allowing the relation of aesthetic and rational ideas, which for Kant remains a purely subjective correspondence, to be recognised as a comprehended and fully actual identity. The upshot, as Hegel says, is that Kant's concept of an intuitive intellect – which, Hegel

Hegel by contrast, looking over the narrow horizon set up by the eighteenth-century concentration on taste, recognises the impetus for development within art and liberates it from Nature and morality *qua* mere law of individual action.

²² Hegel 1975, 56–61 [Hegel 1970, XIII: 83–89].

²³ Hegel 1975, 60 [Hegel 1970, XIII: 88–89].

implies, is in any case appealed to implicitly in Kant's aesthetics²⁴ – ceases to be a mere 'postulate', and is found to have reality in beautiful art, understood as the unity of spiritual content and sensible form.²⁵

In terms of its internal metaphysical structure and the systematic role that it plays – that is, leaving aside all the metaphysical content that fills it out – no difference from Schelling has yet emerged, and it does not do so, I think, until the final phase in the development of romantic art.

One crucial revision in post-Kantian aesthetics, foregrounded by Hegel but already explicit in Jena Romanticism and Schelling, is the richer *reflexive* conception of the work of art, the idea that it incorporates an understanding of itself. Kant's gloss on the work of fine art as the expression of rational ideas remains external to the artwork itself: it does not 'know' that it is a mere subjective *Darstellung*. For the Jena Romantics, by contrast, aesthetic presentation achieves its cognitive target by way of its self-reflection, just as for Schelling what distinguishes the work of art metaphysically from a natural organism is that in it we are presented with an intellectual intuition which is *conscious* of itself as such. And all of this, *modulo* all the specific differences of philosophical formulation, is preserved in Hegel's conception of the romantic artwork: romantic art *itself* understands the relations between the sensory and non-sensory components of the work, in increasingly complex and sophisticated ways, and it *knows* itself to be doing this, whereby it is distinguished from the unknowing, self-blind work of classical art. And yet, on Hegel's account, the romantic development leads to the realisation that the relation which defines its art-project cannot be bridged in a way that will yield satisfaction: it culminates with the insight that art is subject to, as Hegel puts it, a 'limit in itself'.²⁶ This therefore is the point at which Hegel's conception

²⁴ Hegel 1975, 57 [Hegel 1970, XIII: 84].

²⁵ Hegel 1975, 114–115 [Hegel 1970, XIII: 156].

²⁶ 'Die Kunst hat noch in sich selbst eine Schranke und geht deshalb in höhere Formen des Bewußtseins über. Diese Beschränkung bestimmt denn auch die Stellung [...]' (Hegel 1975, 102 [Hegel 1970, XIII: 141]). The highest art is deficient because the limitedness of art makes it so [*sie ist nur mangelhaft, weil die Beschränktheit der Kunst sie dazu macht*]; Hegel 2000 [1828], 28. On the evidence of the 1805–1806 *Philosophy of Spirit*, this conviction was fully formed in Hegel's Jena period: Hegel 1983 [1805–1806], 174–175 [*Jenaer Systementwürfe* III: 254–255]. Hegel's case here for art's limitation, in so far as it goes beyond the familiar point about intuition and immediacy, is hard to grasp: Hegel complains of 'the modern formalism' in art and suggests some actual contradiction in art.

of the late romantic work diverges from that of his predecessors, and which needs to be elucidated.²⁷

If we look at the several suggestions in Hegel's texts as to where the crucial self-subjection-to-limitation might stem from, two stand out: (i) the sensory condition on art's truth (its being bound to immediacy and intuition); and (ii) the surrounding context of modern critical reflection. The first is internal to art and the second external. Hegel presents each as if it were individually sufficient, but he also implies their interconnection, which comes into view if we zoom out and contemplate Hegel's bigger picture. There is however a considerable distance to be covered between Hegel's overarching claim concerning modern reflection's knowing itself to be beyond nature's sensuous immediacy, and his specific claim about art's self-limitation. That modern self-consciousness as a whole is able to juxtapose artworks with purely intellectual objects which cannot be translated into artistic form, and employs forms of reasoning which no artwork could reproduce, cannot be directly relevant. The self-limitation of art cannot in any case be the direct effect of importing into it something from outside – whatever has an effect *on* art must first be assimilated *by* art. Modern consciousness as a whole may set higher value on other forms of spirit, but unless art-consciousness can understand the measure employed here as impinging on its own project, it cannot bend its knee to them.²⁸ If the context of modern reflection is to put rational pressure on art – if there is to be a self-reflection within Romantic art that constitutes the moment of art's *knowledge* of its loss of vocation – then this needs to show up in its internal unfolding, which must mean that it does so in the way that late Romantic art comes to understand its commitment to the medium of sense.²⁹

27 See Henrich 2003a, 75–76, concerning Hegel's differentiation from *Frühromantik*.

28 So even if it is true that art-consciousness is superseded, and that modern consciousness as a whole knows this, still it remains unexplained how this superiority can be *registered* internally by art *as* its own limitation: in its own terms, the late romantic artwork knows itself to be dynamically complex, spanning freedom and nature and all of the other cleavages, but not *defectively* so. If Hegel's thesis about late romantic art is weakened to the claim that the modern work of art merely 'contains a tension', then this is of course accepted by the Philosophical Romantic, who will claim that dynamic internal complexity signals not a lack of philosophical reconciliation but on the contrary its philosophical truth.

29 The point is made by Peters 2015, 122–123.

Contingent failures on the part of art – the repeated judgment of later generations that the art of their predecessors has been in some particular way inadequate, or Hegel’s own assessment of recent art as tending towards arbitrariness and particularity – will not serve here: the case might indeed be made that art comes to know its limitations through an ordinary induction from its own history of repeated failure, but this cannot be Hegel’s story.³⁰ However, two obstacles stand in the way of supposing that romantic art comes to be confronted with *necessary* limits on its deployment of sense materials. The first is simply Hegel’s own compelling account of what seems art’s (hitherto) indefinitely extendable potential for development: the trajectory of art as he recounts it involves continual construction *ex nihilo* and seems to show that what counts as ‘giving artistic form to spiritual content’ is not subject to closure. The second is Hegel’s general anti-Kantian (so-called) ‘conceptualist’ position on sensory knowledge, his denial that sense is fundamentally heterogeneous with thought: which suggests, on the face of it, that sensory materials should be regarded as having indefinite plasticity for thought, an unbounded capacity for being ‘spiritualised’, as Hegel puts it.³¹ The problem in short is that, having rejected Kant’s

30 Arguably it must be Arthur Danto’s view that art comes to an end through a kind of empirical learning, since he does not embed art’s narrative in any broader dynamic of reason. Danto takes Hegel to be posing a challenge: namely to explain how, if it all, claims for the significance of art can be sustained with a good conscience under the conditions of modern reflection. This is of course a fair question, which Hegel makes urgent and to which Danto returns a fascinating answer, but without explicating Hegel’s own loss-of-vocation thesis.

31 Hegel writes: ‘These sensuous shapes and sounds appear in art not merely for the sake of themselves and their immediate shape, but with the aim, in this shape, of affording satisfaction to higher spiritual interests, since they have the power to call forth from all the depths of consciousness a sound and an echo in the Spirit. In this way the sensuous aspect of art is *spiritualised* [*vergeistert*] since the *Spirit* appears in art as made sensuous [*versinnlicht*]. But precisely for this reason an art-product is only there in so far as it has taken its passage through the Spirit and has arisen from spiritual activity’ (Hegel 1975, 39 [Hegel 1970, XIII: 61]). Two things in this passage may be thought to intimate art’s inherent limitation. Hegel implies (i) that it is only because and in so far as the sensible can elicit a response (‘echo’) in Spirit that it qualifies as spiritual; and (ii) that art needs to make Spirit sensible. However, the first must be discounted in so far as it is not in general Hegel’s way to analyse arthood dispositionally, while the second exploits an ambiguity in *Versinnlichung* and is inconsistent with

sense/intellect dualism, Hegel does not seem well placed to show that sense *itself* imposes limits on (i) what might count as a 'realisation of spirit in a sensory medium', or (ii) the scope which sense materials afford for being spiritualised.

The full difficulty emerges when it is asked how the end of day moment of loss of vocation is related to that of the original formation of Romantic art. Romantic art cannot coherently revoke its original premises, nor can the loss of vocation be simply a direct logical consequence of art's coming to full knowledge of these. In any case, the project of romantic art appears on the face of it fully coherent: it is grounded on the insight that spirit is *not itself* sensuous, and that this leaves it free to determine its relations to sense, from which it need not recoil and which pose no threat of degradation; its independence and autonomy do not stand in need of proof, and spirit knows, in its later stage if not at the outset, that it can relate itself to sense without compromising its own reality.

That such an undertaking is furthermore *purposive* – that spirit, though able to enjoy self-assurance independently of sense, should *also* want to know itself through a positive relation to sense – must also be a premise of romantic art. This follows from the consideration that, if Hegel's narrative of art is not to fracture, romantic art must be able to relate itself back to classical art and retain the memory of it in a way that motivates rather than stultifies its own endeavour: if romantic art cannot understand itself as carrying over the ambition and achievement of classical art, in its own modified terms, then either it cannot make a beginning (for there is nothing for it to grow out of), or it can do so only by repudiating its predecessor – that is, by declaring that classical art was abortive, that its simple unity was an *illusion*, and that it is only

Hegel's statements elsewhere that what is *sensuous* for Romantic art is nothing merely *natural*. The sheer fact of the non-sensuous nature or essence of Spirit would indeed limit art, *if* art were bound to represent Spirit as having a sensory nature or as dependent on sense – and this limitation would be unavoidable, *if* art's project were to arrive at Spirit by *beginning* from the side of sense (as if retracing the path from Philosophy of Nature to Philosophy of Spirit). But once it has been established that Spirit in its essence is not sensuous – this being the reconfiguration that defines its (late) romantic form – art does not begin in sense rather than Spirit, and so cannot encounter this limitation. Hegel himself formulates the key point: art 'has for its condition the self-consciousness of the free Spirit, hence the consciousness that the sensory and merely natural lacks independence in the face of Spirit, and so *makes the sensory and natural into nothing more than the expression of spirit*' (2007, 561–562 [Hegel 1970, X: 371]).

now that art proper can begin. In which case, instituting itself afresh – or perhaps reinstating the symbolic, from a position which no longer strains to achieve knowledge of spirit – romantic art is freed from the shadow of classical beauty, again making it hard to see how it might come to consider itself as having lost its vocation.

What Hegel seems to require is a tension within the relation of sense and spirit in romantic art that, having served as its dynamic, can reveal itself ultimately as also its endpoint, but which does not amount to such a vicious contradiction that it stymies romantic art at the outset. And yet Hegel's loss-of-vocation argument seems to assume the impossibility of there being anything *between* complete identity, and symbolisation: Hegel talks as if the spirit/sense relation in art had to be *either* absolutely rationally necessary (the unqualified form-content identity of classical art) *or* fundamentally arbitrary. Passages in Hegel's discussion of romantic art – where for example spirit seems unable to recognise itself in any relation to sense without recoiling into inwardness – hint at his assumption of this dichotomy.³² The same assumption seems present in the third and concluding stage of symbolic art at the point where, Hegel says, the concept of 'the symbol proper', *das eigentliche Symbol*, once formulated, drops away, ceasing to provide an overarching conception for art and becoming a minor element in the classical and romantic, in the form of mere fable, parable, allegory, simile, etc., where the two sides, sensuous shape and spiritual meaning, are not 'moulded into one another [*ineinandergearbeitet*]' but connected only by 'a *subjective* third thing', namely 'the invisible subjective activity that is making the comparison'.³³ Yet the existence of middle ground between these extremes is by Hegel's own account the premise of romantic art and, as said, appears to follow

32 E.g., Hegel's opening formulation of the concept of art in the *Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Mind*, §556: the finite moment of art, the concrete shape in its 'natural immediacy', is 'transfigured by the informing mind for the expression of the Idea' but remains 'only a *sign* of the Idea [*nur Zeichen der Idee*]' (2007, 259 [Hegel 1970, X: 367]). The assumption seems to show itself again when Hegel asks whether the sub-class of late romantic works which aim to present contingent reality in a portrait-like [*porträtartig*] manner, i.e., with attention to its prosaic mutability and without relation to the Ideal, 'are still to be called works of art' (Hegel 1975, 596 [Hegel 1970, XIV: 223]), adding that romantic art is portrait-like 'more or less throughout [*mehr oder weniger überall*]'.

33 See Hegel 1975, 317–322 [Hegel 1970, XIII: 411–418], Hegel 1975, 431 [Hegel 1970, XIV: 18]), and Hegel 1975, 303 [Hegel 1970, XIII: 393]

from Hegel's general position on the dualities of appearance/reality and sense/concept.³⁴

Locating the *source* of art's recognition of its own limitation is therefore the first problem. Another, which grows directly out of it, concerns how, even granting the self-limitation, late romantic art is supposed to conceive itself. This is where the self-understanding of the artwork, the reflexive dimension, creates difficulty. It seems Hegel must say *both* that the late romantic work understands itself in Kantian fashion, that is, as a 'merely intended infinitude', *nur gemeinte Unendlichkeit*,³⁵ a sensory presentation necessarily inadequate to its projected object, and that it must *also* understand itself in the terms of Philosophical Romanticism – since its projection of a cognitive relation is what defines its vocation as a form of spirit, and to abandon that aspiration would be self-nullifying (or alternatively would, as said above, make romantic art as fundamentally different from classical art as revealed religion is from art).³⁶ If so, then late romantic art appears a hybrid in which contradictory conceptions are superimposed, giving it the structure of what Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* calls an Unhappy Consciousness, which alternates ceaselessly between two opposed forms, in one of which consciousness avows its own mere subjectivity, while in the other it lays claim to absolute validity. A divided self-consciousness in which each side represents the defeat of the other may avoid disintegration and even achieve a kind of metastability, in so far as external forces hold it in check, which might be supplied by the characteristic forms of reflection of modern life, and the philosophical knowledge of art which Hegel says we now have need of. But this seems more a matter of forceful containment than reconciliation, and does not correspond to the end-state of romantic art as Hegel describes it.

34 Again, extrapolating beyond the text: Hegel's supposition may be that Philosophical Romanticism lacks a *positive* account of Spirit-sense 'realisation' that gets beyond Kant's inscrutable isomorphism of sensory form and Idea, reflecting the fact that there *is no* such self-standing relation; his complaint being, in other words, that the claims of Schelling and others tell us only what the Spirit-sense relation in the work is supposed to *count as*, but nothing about what it *consists in*. But again, this would seem to overshoot, by implying that the entire development of romantic art has been guided by an illusion.

35 Hegel 1983 [1805–1806], 175 [*Jenaer Systementwürfe* III: 254].

36 Or, as a further alternative, it would leave art in the same kind of situation as Socialist Realism puts it in – that is, requiring art to resolve itself into craft.

If we now recall the distinction drawn earlier of different forms of Philosophical Romanticism, we arrive at a suggestion for what may, in some part, underlie Hegel's loss-of-vocation thesis. In so far as Philosophical Romanticism builds the failure of philosophy into the success of art, it is, as said earlier, quite clear how it motivates Hegel's loss-of-vocation thesis, and also clear that the two considerations to which Hegel appeals – viz., the limitations of sense, and the context of modern reflection – have force: since Novalis and Schlegel, in Hegel's view, have no genuine concept of absolute spirit, they in effect revert to the symbolic form of art and set themselves the impossible task of squeezing knowledge of the infinite out of sense, in full modern reflective awareness of its finitude, a paradoxical endeavour which can result only in a mere 'pretence of knowing'.³⁷ But the situation with the weaker form, which maintains art in its highest vocation *without* requiring philosophy's failure, is quite different, and demands a different justification for the loss-of-vocation thesis. That Hegel was disposed to assimilate all Philosophical Romanticism to the strong form is suggested by his treatment of Schelling in his lectures on the history of philosophy, the implication of which is that Schelling's philosophy never managed to get beyond the reliance placed in the 1800 *System* on the 'oracle' of art.³⁸ One place where Hegel does come close to engaging with the weaker form of Philosophical Romanticism – his real competitor, I have been suggesting – is his late review of Solger's *Posthumous Writings*, where he distinguishes carefully those tendencies in Solger which align him with Schlegel, from those which, Hegel allows, qualify as genuinely speculative, though lacking adequate formulation.³⁹ But Hegel gives no hint as to what would happen

37 As said of Schlegel in Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (Hegel 1995, 507 [Hegel 1970, XX: 416]).

38 In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* Hegel appears to reason that Schelling remains unwittingly committed to the aestheticism of the 1800 *System* in so far as he later continues to fail to fulfil the demands of absolute knowing in any other, non-aesthetic way: see Hegel 1995, 524–525, 540 and 542 [Hegel 1970, XX: 433–435, 449 and 454].

39 Hegel draws a distinction, roughly aligned with my two forms of Philosophical Romanticism, between Solger and Tieck on the one hand, and Friedrich Schlegel on the other, on the basis of their different attitudes to philosophy: Schlegel claims to stand 'on the highest peak of philosophy', whereas 'Tieck's irony remains free of charlatantry in its relation to philosophy' and Solger's irony 'leaves the highest speculative principles as well as the axioms of concrete truth unharmed' (Hegel 2000 [1828], 373 and 391 [Hegel 1970, XI: 234 and 260]).

to Solger's claim for the cognitive equivalence of art and philosophy if Solger's metaphysics were not inadequate.

Let me conclude this section with a methodological observation. I have been talking somewhat as if 'the romantic form of art' were an independent entity which relates to other forms of spirit as one individual does to others, such that a clear line can be drawn between what is internal and external to it, and of which it is proper to require the full rational coherence demanded of a single mind. In this there is admittedly, as noted earlier, an artifice, but it does not falsify Hegel's procedure. Art falls within the sphere of absolute spirit, not mere unconscious natural processes, and if Hegel's sequence of forms of consciousness is not merely a descriptive schema for ordering data, then the demand placed on each *Gestalt* to exhibit rationality and follow a unitary narrative must be taken seriously: the requirement that each form of consciousness show its adequacy under interrogation, is the very means by which we determine whether it lives up to the demands of the whole (indeed it is the means by which we arrive at the whole). Arguably there is a general tension in Hegel between, on the one hand, his practice of identifying historical developments with thought-sequences, and on the other his commitment to regarding rationality not as fully given *ab initio* but as a gradual achievement, as there is also between his practice of discriminating fundamentally different forms of spirit, and his requirement that they be coherently interrelated. Be that as it may, honouring Hegel's dialectic makes it appropriate to press hard on art's self-consciousness.

THE PERSISTENCE OF PHILOSOPHICAL ROMANTICISM IN ARTISTIC MODERNISM

It is safe to say that theoretical discourse about the arts from the late nineteenth century all the way through high modernism becomes increasingly eclectic, wide ranging and experimental in terms of the resources that it draws on, and the formulations that it ventures – in comparison with, say, eighteenth-century aesthetic discourse, which appears by contrast relatively uniform in its vocabulary, and tighter in its conceptual focus. What this seems to indicate (among other things) is an intensified felt *need* for theoretical articulation of artistic experience and practice, along with increased difficulty in *satisfying* it. This raises difficult questions concerning the role and status of reflections about art in the modernist period, but what matters for present purposes is simply, in the first place,

the *fact* of this diversity, along with, second, the peculiarly *indeterminate* status of late modern art discourse – in short, the fact that thought about art does not settle down but accelerates and diffuses, manifesting deep uncertainty concerning the *warrant* for claims about art and their relation to other kinds of discourse.

The further point to be drawn out concerns the philosophical character of an important subset of ideas about art entertained in the broad modernist period. There is no mistaking the recurrence of certain powerful theoretical motifs in the art literature of modernity, which become prominent in the late nineteenth century and thereafter keep a firm hold on thinking about the visual, literary and musical arts: the ideal of abstraction; the integrity of pure form as a product of artistic intuition; the self-sufficiency of the artwork and its incommensurability with other objects; the correlative identification of music as the condition to which art aspires. These notions appear plainly at odds with the relatively circumscribed, world-orientated tasks that Hegel sets for the art of the future: the thousand-eyed Argus surveying humanity, and attention to the prose of everyday life, ‘the finite things of the world’.⁴⁰ These leave no room for doubt about the seriousness of his thesis. The claims of artistic modernism, however, are standardly accompanied, not by any acknowledgement of a higher authorising standpoint, but by assertions of the autonomy of artistic cognition: what is claimed for art is truth relating to the unconditioned that does not derive from any overarching theoretical world-view.⁴¹ Which consorts with the fact that the major philosophical figures most often referenced in the art literature of modernism are either outright Philosophical Romantics or reflect its *Ideengut* – Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson.

To plot the actual historical relation of artistic modernism and Philosophical Romanticism would of course far exceed the space available, but the high points are easily identified. Taking it that the development of abstraction constitutes the most pronounced feature of pictorial modernism, it is of high significance that, various studies have emphasised,⁴² the

⁴⁰ Hegel 1975, 594 [Hegel 1970, XIV: 221].

⁴¹ In the writings of, for example and among many others, Maurice Denis, Rémy de Gourmont, Téodor de Wyzewa, Julius Meier-Graefe, Gauguin, Braque, Mondrian, Malevich, Kandinsky, de Chirico, Barnett Newman, Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko. Relevant extracts are collated in Chipp (ed.) 1968 and Harrison and Wood (eds.) 1998.

⁴² See Rosenblum 1975; Tuchman and Freeman (eds.) 1986; and Golding 2000.

European avant-garde was soaked in theosophical, Romantic-philosophical and other sundry intuitionist-cum-mystical intellectual legacies, and that these, by elevating art to a higher ontological/symbolic plane, energised the pursuit of formal innovation. Here are passages marking two high points in this development. The first is from Kandinsky's seminal and highly influential *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912):⁴³

Form alone, even though totally abstract and geometrical, has a power of inner suggestion. A triangle (without the accessory consideration of its being acute- or obtuse-angled or equilateral) has a spiritual value of its own. In connection with other forms, this value may be somewhat modified, but remains in quality the same. The case is similar with a circle, a square, or any conceivable geometrical figure. As above, with the colour red, we have here a subjective substance in an objective shell.

The second, postdating Kandinsky by three and a half decades, is from Barnett Newman, who reaffirms in unqualified (now Emersonian) terms the metaphysical significance of pictorial abstraction:⁴⁴

43 Kandinsky 1977 [1911], 28–29. Wilhelm Worringer, in *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908), another highly influential text of the period, argues that art's trajectory is metaphysical and that the art which answers to our deepest metaphysical needs ('transcendental art') is antithetical to the classical ideal. The art that Worringer describes as offering the highest aesthetic satisfaction corresponds to what Hegel calls the symbolic, but has a different, Schopenhauerian meaning: it expresses alienation from and refuses reconciliation with nature.

44 Newman 1992, 163–164. Newman is here responding to Clement Greenberg's questioning of the school's putative 'metaphysical' content. In other texts from 1947 ('The ideographic picture' and 'The first man was an artist') Newman declares, employing language that seems to come straight from the Oldest System-Programme of German Idealism, that the 'basis of an aesthetic act is the pure idea', 'the pure idea is, of necessity, an aesthetic act', 'only the pure idea has meaning'; the aesthetic act is a 'postulate' that 'always precedes the social act' (Newman 1992, 108 and 158). The inaugural 1943 *New York Times* letter of Rothko and Gottlieb (and Newman) has the same import: abstract works express 'complex thoughts', 'intrinsic ideas' concerning a subject-matter 'which is tragic and timeless' (Harrison and Wood (eds.) 1998, 561–563). Rothko asserts his continuity with the Romantic concern with the 'transcendental', describing his pictures as 'dramas' 'in an unknown space': the picture must be 'miraculous', 'a revelation' (Harrison and Wood (eds.) 1998, 563).

The American [abstract expressionist] artists under discussion create a truly abstract world which can be discussed only in metaphysical terms. These artists are at home in the world of pure idea, in the *meanings* of abstract concepts, just as the European painter is at home in the world of cognitive objects and materials. And just as the European painter can transcend his objects to build an abstract world, so the American transcends his abstract world to make that world real, rendering the epistemological implications of abstract concepts with sufficient conviction and understanding to give them body and expression [...] To put it philosophically, the European is concerned with the transcendence of objects, the American is concerned with the transcendental experience.

It is of further importance that the nineteenth-century sources of abstraction overlap substantially and intermix with those of literary modernism – the French development from Baudelaire via Mallarmé up to Valéry, and thence to Eliot and Stevens⁴⁵ – and that this unitary node should also be heavily invested with, and indebted to, the nineteenth century's recognition of music as an artistic absolute, for which correspondingly absolute cognition can be claimed.⁴⁶

45 See Friedrich 1960/1985, and Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988. The latter is conceived as an archaeology of a conception that 'determines the age we live in as the *critical age par excellence*' and that 'still delimits our horizon' (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1988, 16). Of particular interest regarding abstraction as a common force in poetry and painting, indebted to Romantic idealism, is Ragg 2010. The convergence and mutual imbrication in modernism of the arts of painting, music and literature, and of their respective theories, is an additional and un-Hegelian development: their de-differentiation signals absolutist ambitions, as if the plural arts were attempting to (re)combine in order to (re)constitute Art in the singular – as Schelling suggests *Kunst* is properly conceived, in parallel with the self-differentiating oneness of Nature (1978 [1800], 231 [Schlegel 1991, III: 627]).

46 The topic receives a comprehensive treatment in Bonds 2014, and its relevance to my argument warrants a summary of his conclusions. Bonds explains that, in Wagner's original usage, the specific concept of 'absolute music' does not denote music *qua* cognising the absolute but rather pure instrumental music that has become 'autonomous through and through', whereby it attains in Wagner's estimate too high a level of abstraction, isolating itself from society and withdrawing from life (Bonds 2014, 131–135). Wagner's polemical usage gave way rapidly however to one that was neutral, and in his seventh chapter

That artistic modernism should orient itself in the direction of Philosophical Romanticism has a certain straightforward intelligibility: if its task, whatever it (or they) may be exactly, requires that it picture itself as 'unbounded', then the ideology of Philosophical Romanticism fits the bill, not by dint of *supplying* an intellectual authority, but by denying that art has *need* of one. This yields a peculiar yet altogether intelligible situation in which the burgeoning discourse surrounding art, seeking to provide it with the theoretical home that it fails to find elsewhere in the ideology of the modern world, finds itself best fulfilled by a type of theory which instructs art that, being cognitively self-sufficient, it has no need of theory. To acknowledge this strand in the self-understanding of modern art is of course not to claim it as the most important, let alone the only one, nor is it to affirm that Philosophical Romanticism provides either insight into the real underlying historic dynamic of artistic modernism, or a fruitful

Bonds surveys those in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century who subscribed explicitly to a conception of music as disclosive – as 'oracle' rather than 'oration' – which eventually became a commonplace. Included in this impressive list are Herder, Wackenroder, Tieck, Jean Paul, both Schlegels, Schelling, Hoffmann, Grillparzer and Hanslick (on the strength of the final paragraph of the earlier editions of his *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen*), along with less well-known figures, such as Wilhelm Heinse, F.H. von Dahlberg, C.F.D. Schubart, F.G. Hand, K.F. Krause, Gustav Schilling and Theodor Mundt; Wagner too subscribes to the disclosive conception after his discovery of Schopenhauer in 1854 (Bonds 2014, 238–241). Bonds notes Hegel's dissent (2014, 120 and 148–149). Of particular interest is Bonds' discussion in his ninth chapter of Hanslick's uncertainty regarding what he should say about the 'spiritual content' [*geistiger Inhalt*] found in 'tonally moving forms' [*tönend bewegte Formen*], which he had identified in the first and second editions, betraying the influence of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* (Bonds 2014, 194–195), with cognition of 'the infinite' and 'the universe as a whole': Hanslick needed the affirmation in order for the value of music to be not merely formalistic, and in order for music's specific beauty to belong to beauty in general, but it opened him to the charge (levelled by Zimmermann) of contaminating 'pure music'. What emerges from Bonds' study is the constancy of the commitment to music's absolute significance from the middle of the nineteenth century until the very recent present (Bonds suggests the year 1970): the assumption may have undergone different formulations, but it was never in dispute in the arguments between Hanslick and Wagner, nor those between Wagnerians and early twentieth-century composers. As Bonds suggests, if music's autonomy is meaningful, i.e., is not to reduce to a mere 'play with tones', then the 'premise of transcendence in music' admits of no real alternative (2014, 292).

way of elucidating particular modernist works.⁴⁷ The point is simply that, with reference back to Hegel's argument with his contemporaries, there is at least one significant tendency in the later history of art's self-reflection that seems to take the side of Philosophical Romanticism.

CASE STUDY: BIFOCAL FIGURES IN BÖHME, SCHLEGEL AND ARP

Opportunities abound for illustrating the persistence in artistic modernism of the proprietary themes of Philosophical Romanticism, but the following – borrowed almost in its entirety from a fascinating essay by Harriett Watts⁴⁸ – provides a clear and compelling case of pictorial modernism engaging with the romantic absolute.

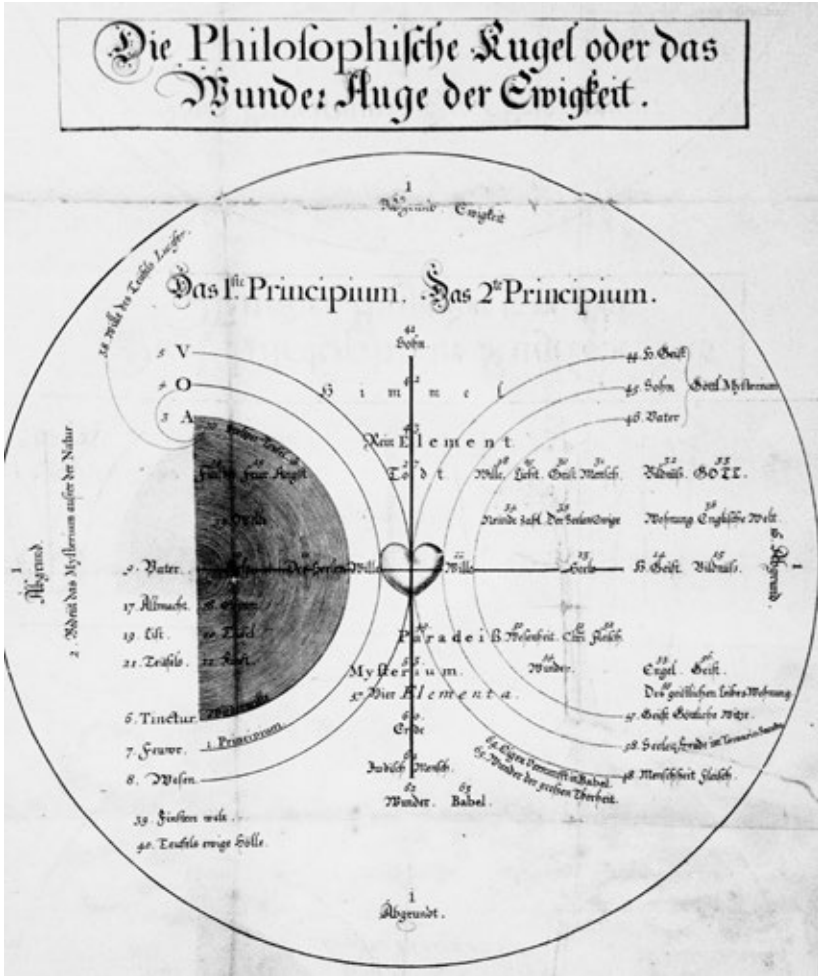
The writings of seventeenth-century mystic Jakob Böhme held huge interest for the Jena Romantics, Schelling and others of the period drawn to philosophico-theological innovation; Böhme encouraged and assisted the recasting of Spinoza's *Deus sive Natur* in the innovative terms of the new idealism.⁴⁹ Watts unearths from Böhme's treatise, *Forty Questions of the Soul* (1632), a diagram [Fig. 11.1] that represents the divine eye as a circle divided into two, with 'the resulting arcs placed back to back and rotated in opposite directions', each forming its own domain, one of light and one of darkness. One eye thus becomes two eyes, which propel one another through their mutual opposition. At the centre, their point of contact, lies the divine spark, its ignition generating 'the outer circle that contains and unifies the entire system'.⁵⁰

47 The literature here is of course vast. As a counter to the transcendent(al)ist or spiritual interpretation of pictorial abstraction, see for example Clark 1999, chapters six and seven, Fer 2000 and Pippin 2013. The contributions in Crowther and Wünsche (eds.) 2012 advance a novel interpretation of abstract art as internally related to nature. This coheres with the Romantic reading in so far as the nature in question – from which abstraction is made, and which artistic creativity re-manifests – is that of *Naturphilosophie*; see the first paper in the collection, by Wünsche.

48 Watts 1986.

49 It is indicative that Hegel, though he grants Böhme a substantial place in the history of modern philosophy (Hegel 1995, 188–219 [Hegel 1970, XX: 91–119]), is sharply critical of his unmethodical and unsystematic ('pictorial' and 'barbaric') metaphysics, and hesitates to credit them with speculative meaning.

50 Watts 1986, 246.



11.1 Jakob Böhme, *Vierzig Fragen von der Seelen Urstand, Essenz, Wesen, Natur und Eigenschaft, was sie von Ewigkeit in Ewigkeit sei* (ed. B. Walter: Amsterdam, 1682), p. 27. Photograph by Sebastian Gardner.

Geometrical forms and their dynamic properties recur, Watts notes, in Schlegel's writings. As Marshall Brown's enlightening study makes clear, concepts of shape are generally indispensable to the Early German Romantics, for whom geometrical figures serve to articulate reflective notions which pose difficulties for pure conceptual thinking.⁵¹ Specifically, Romantic texts deploy the idea-cum-image of two vectors, one centripetal and one centrifugal, jointly composing a circle that closes back on itself to form its own point of origin, and which in its expansive movement creates and comprehends the chaos to which its unitary centre point is opposed. Watts draws attention to the following fragment from Schlegel's 1799 notebook:⁵²

The ellipse, the circle, the parabola and hyperbola are but explosions, developments of the point, which must be conceived in a highly mystical fashion. In the primitive point is duality. Ellipse the first symbol of the same; circle and parabola but deviations.

That these notions are for Schlegel not merely fanciful can be seen from the use he makes of bifocal diagrams in his lectures on transcendental philosophy, where the basic form of his metaphysics and its corresponding epistemology are represented as a double movement of division and unification [Fig. 11.2].⁵³

Turning now to pictorial modernism: Jean Arp, Watts informs us, had a lifelong interest in Böhme – he gave a reading from Böhme's *Aurora* at the Dadaist Cabaret Voltaire in 1917 – and the two-foci structure of Böhme's metaphysics, Watts suggests, re-emerges in Arp's characteristic figures [e.g. Fig. 11.3].

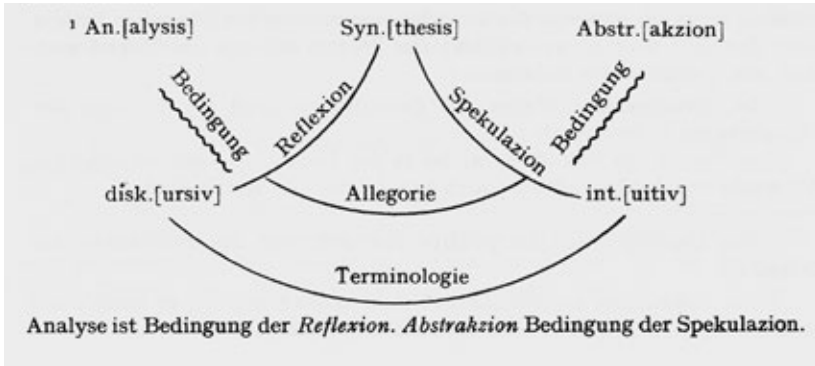
Of course this falls short of proving an unbroken chain of causality in the history of art-and-ideas, or the need for a Philosophical Romantic iconography for abstract art.⁵⁴ All the same, it counts for something that

51 A practice Hegel attacks: see Hegel 1970 [1830], 38–39 (§259Z) [Hegel 1970 IX, 53–54].

52 Quoted in Brown 1963, 172; from Schlegel 1963, 304 (*Philosophische Lehrjahre*, no. 1322). For more on the ellipse in Kant and post-Kantian thought, see Ameriks 2012, esp. the Introduction, and 283–286 on Hölderlin's 'excentrische Bahn'.

53 Taken from Schlegel 1991 [1800–1801], 19 and 25.

54 It may for instance be denied that the Böhman resonances properly belong to what *Hegel* would identify as the art-meaning. The same question is raised by the iconographic significances of Dutch still life: see the contribution to this volume by Fresh Rush.



11.2 Illustration from Friedrich Schlegel's *Transzendentalphilosophie* (ed. M. Elsässer: Frankfurt am Main, 1991), p. 57. Photograph by Sebastian Gardner (with kind permission of Felix Meiner Verlag).

a direct thematic route can be plotted from Böhme's intellectual intuitions – *via* his discursive formulations and diagrammatic representation of his metaphysics, and Schlegel's doctrine of shapes and visualisation of transcendental philosophy – to early explorations in pictorial abstraction on the part of an artist known to have had a well developed interest in Böhme.

Returning to Hegel, we find that his treatment of the aesthetics of geometry displays just enough sympathy with the notion that geometrical forms are intrinsically metaphysically meaningful to make us wonder if there might not after all be a basis within his aesthetics for accrediting twentieth-century abstract art with the kinds of meanings that, Watts' study indicates, would suggest themselves to a suitably re-historicised Early German Romantic. Geometrical form is not, in Hegel's view, meaningless, and its metaphysical – that is, extra-mathematical and supra-quantitative – meaning is related, internally and rationally, to its intuitable properties:⁵⁵

Now, however, in more detail, from the rather abstract form of regularity [*Regelmäßigkeit*] we must distinguish conformity to law [*Gesetzmäßigkeit*], since it stands at a higher stage and constitutes the transition to the freedom of life, both natural and spiritual. Yet,

⁵⁵ Hegel 1975, 138 [Hegel 1970, XIII: 184–185].



11.3 Jean Arp, Woodcut print (*Variante de Arntz*) from *Cinéma calendrier du coeur abstrait*, 1921 (25.2 × 20.6 cm). New York: The Museum of Modern Art, Louis E. Stern Collection. © The Museum of Modern Art; licensed by Scala / Art Resource, New York.

regarded by itself, conformity to law is certainly not the subjective total unity and freedom itself, though it is already a *totality* of *essential* differences which do not simply present themselves as *differences* and opposites but in their totality display *unity* and connection. [...] Now if we see these differences associated in their completeness, we are satisfied. In this satisfaction there lies the rational element, the fact that sense is gratified only by the totality, and indeed by the totality of differences demanded by the essence of the thing. Yet once again the connection remains as a secret bond which for the spectator is partly something to which he is accustomed, partly the foreshadowing of something deeper [*tieferen Ahnung*].

Hegel works his way next through various geometrical forms – parallel lines, the triangle, the circle, and the ellipse – in each case determining their adequacy as forms of identity-in-difference, before settling first on the oval and then, finally, on Hogarth's line of beauty as the highest form:⁵⁶

Of higher freedom, with inner conformity to law, is the oval. It conforms to law, but it has not been possible to discover the law and to calculate it mathematically. It is not an ellipse; the upper curve differs from the lower one. Yet even this freer natural line, if we bisect it along its major axis, still provides two equal halves.

The final supersession of the purely regular in the case of conformity to law occurs in lines similar to ovals, which nevertheless, when divided along their major axis, provide unequal sections, in that one side is not repeated on the other, but waves otherwise. An example of this kind is the so-called 'waving' line which Hogarth has called the line of beauty. Thus, for example, the lines of the arm wave differently on one side from the other. Here is conformity to law without mere regularity. This kind of conformity to law determines the forms of the higher living organisms in a great variety of ways.

Now conformity to law is the essential quality which settles differences and their unity, but, on the one hand, it *only* dominates abstractly and does not let individuality come in any way into free movement; and, on the other hand, it lacks the higher freedom of subjectivity and therefore cannot bring into appearance the animation and ideality thereof.

56 Hegel 1975, 139–140 [Hegel 1970, XIII: 186–187].

Hegel sustains, then, his contention that free individual subjectivity is missing from even the highest geometrical figure; which is why these passages occur in the chapter on natural beauty. Hegel would deny therefore that spirit in the twentieth century can rediscover in geometrical forms, through the mediation of art, a realisation of 'something deeper' which meets its need, and is not made redundant by any other form of absolute spirit.

CONCLUSION

The claim that art has lost its vocation can be read, on the one hand, not as a strict part of Hegel's history of art-consciousness but as a counter-assertion to the Philosophical Romantics, whereby Hegel simply points out that by his own lights their investment in art is misguided. So considered, Hegel's target is exclusively and merely philosophical, and his claim, whether or not it is true, creates no interpretative puzzle. But Hegel also, on the other hand, wants the loss of vocation to be registered *within* art; indeed this is part of his *argument* for the loss-of-vocation thesis, which is supposed to emerge not by direct derivation from general metaphysics on high but from consideration of art's actual history. The claim to historical explanation is open to doubt, I suggested, in so far as one central strand in art's self-reflection after Hegel gives strong sign of being drawn back to the type of self-understanding that the loss-of-vocation thesis makes unavailable. But in any case, history aside, I argued that the crux of the case for the loss-of-vocation thesis is elusive, whence the puzzle concerning Hegel's understanding of the (self-understanding of the) late romantic work.

If this is correct, then there appear to be two options, namely those indicated at the outset. Relinquishing the loss-of-vocation thesis allows Hegel's own conception of the late romantic artwork to coincide with that of some of his contemporaries, bringing to an end his argument with Philosophical Romanticism in its weaker form within the philosophy of art, and moving it back up to the level of general metaphysics.⁵⁷ If on the other hand the thesis is sustained, then the situation, Hegel must recognise, is that late romantic art has lost its vocation but *does not know*

⁵⁷ See Schaeffer 2000, especially chapter 3. Schaeffer attaches little importance to the end of art thesis and proposes that what really distinguishes Hegel from his aestheticist contemporaries is the historical-systematic character of his version of the speculative (i.e., Romantic) theory of art.

it – or if it does, it needs to pretend otherwise. In which case we have in modern art-consciousness, I suggest, a kind of Unhappy Consciousness.⁵⁸ This is, I think, Adorno's assessment, which can be taken independently from Adorno's own theoretical claims about art, and seems both independently plausible – there is surely something right about the idea that what we have come to want from art borders on incoherence – and also a result that makes sense from the standpoint of Hegel's contemporary reinterpretation: in so far as the general Hegelian narrative needs to get to grips with the persisting self-dissatisfactions of modernity, modern art can be regarded as giving these symptomatic expression, hence as providing a place to start on the diagnostic task.⁵⁹

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58 Which is after all the exact spiritual centre of modernist literature, exemplified by Joyce's Bloom/Dedalus, Mann's Naptha/Settembrini, Musil's Ulrich/Moosbrugger, Beckett's I-cannot-but-I-must, and numerous other antinomies and self-negations.

59 To be integrated with other revisions and extensions of the Hegelian story of art, as Pippin pre-eminently has attempted (2013). I would like to thank the editors of this collection and others at the conference in London where this paper was presented for extremely helpful comments, and Valerie Gardner and Louise Milne for guidance on art historical sources.

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PAUL A. KOTTMAN

ENVOI

The art of Hegel's aesthetics

As my co-editor Michael Squire notes in his introduction to this volume, the conference at which the papers collected here were first delivered was motivated in part by the recent rise of 'global art history' and by renewed calls for 'comparativist' approaches to the world's various art practices and traditions.¹ Our shared appreciation for Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* was rooted in our interest in the very meaning and possibility of a contemporary, potentially global 'human science' of art history – of an inquiry into the very meaning of human art-making, across eras and regions, that does not necessarily entail or require the making of more art.

Recognising Hegel in this way is, of course, not a novel enterprise. Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art* are widely acknowledged to be essential to very constitution of the discipline of what we now call art history. Already for E.H. Gombrich, Hegel was the very 'father of art history', and one of the distinguishing features of Hegel's approach to art is his eschewal of a general theory of aesthetic experience or aesthetic judgment in favour of a historical treatment of art, one whose systematic categories ('symbolic', 'classical', 'romantic') are developmental and narrative rather than analytical.² In fact, Hegel's denial of the total autonomy of the aesthetic, and his insistence that art, like religion, is a social-historical institution connected to the commitments and values of whole social worlds has

¹ For overviews, see Elkins 2006; Moyn and Sartori 2013; D'Souza and Casid 2014. Cf. Squire's introduction to this volume, pp. 50–51.

² See Gombrich 1984; Pippin 2008; Pinkard 2007; Summers 2007.

become – in general terms – a reigning orthodoxy in the study of art and literature across the humanities. In that sense, Hegel's influence is everywhere. Nevertheless, relatively little attention is paid nowadays to Hegel's *Lectures* themselves by art historians (or by scholars of literary history or theatre history). Just over a century ago, A.C. Bradley wrote that: 'Since Aristotle dealt with [poetics], and, as usual, drew the main features of his subject with those sure and simple strokes which no later hand has rivalled, the only philosopher who has treated it in a manner both original and searching is Hegel'.³ A century after Bradley, Hegel's writings now stand at a certain remove from the concerns of the 'mainstream' contemporary study of literature and the arts.

What accounts for this?

The sheer difficulty of making sense of Hegel's philosophical idiom is an obvious obstacle, of course, as is the challenging nature of the claims he makes. Increasing disciplinary specialisation in areas of study across the human sciences – hardly unique to art history or to Hegel scholarship – is another obstacle: our conference in fact sought to bring into public conversation experts in adjacent 'subfields' who otherwise might not be talking to one another. Also, while the reception of Hegel was enormously important to the intellectual climate in France, Germany and Italy throughout much of the twentieth century, the study of Hegel has returned to prominence among Anglophone philosophers only in the past forty years or so. And even within Anglophone scholarship, the *Lectures on Fine Art* have been far less discussed than, say, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* or his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*.

But leaving these circumstantial issues to one side, it seems worth examining deeper assumptions at work within art history, or within the reception of Hegel more broadly, which prevent a more sustained reflection on Hegel's importance to contemporary art history. At the same time, it seems worth asking whether such assumptions can be answered by those who think that Hegel *should* continue to matter to anyone interested in the study of human art-making. Because the contributions to the present volume collectively and individually respond to such questions, I want to conclude the volume by gathering up some thoughts on these issues.

Two sources of suspicion about Hegel's approach to the history of art, from within art history's own self-understanding, are readily identifiable.

3 Bradley 1909, 69.

First, there is the suspicion that Hegel's approach is simply too 'Eurocentric' – not only in its privileging of the Graeco-Roman-Christian heritage, but in the way in which Hegel also seeks to *justify* his marginalisation of the artistic production of peoples in Africa, Asia or the Americas. A related worry is that, even if one were to expand the conception of artworks under consideration to include non-western works in the *kind* of narrative Hegel tells – for example, by arguing that Hegel's understanding of 'classical' art can apply to the development of architecture and sculpture in ancient China as well as Greece – the use of a category like 'classical' to speak of non-western traditions itself is sometimes thought to amount to a kind of intellectual colonialisation.⁴

Second, there is a more general scepticism about the very existence of 'fine art' – that is, a scepticism about the very existence of artworks or practices of general significance for human cognition, works which are hence not just bearers or expressions of localised cultural outlooks and traditions, or of other social contests for power. Consider, for example, the rise of 'visual studies' or 'cultural-media studies' – and their eschewal of any reference to 'Art'.⁵ In literary studies, too, the issue of canon-formation is nowadays often said to be the result of the competing social interests that go into the 'construction' of national identity or linguistic tradition, rather than an ongoing debate about what *counts* as a significant work of literature and why – apart from the way in which the dissemination of certain texts can matter to the kinds of contests for control of the social agenda that go into 'nation building' or into the formation of a diaspora.⁶ So, there is deep scepticism about the very existence of fine art within the very disciplines that study artworks.

Third, aspects of Hegel's own art-historical narrative have seemed questionable – worth 'leaving behind' – even to those who otherwise see Hegel's work as of enormous significance: above all, Hegel's famous claim that art, in its highest vocation, is and remains a thing of the past has seemed to many highly contestable, if not downright wrong.

4 For a discussion of the methodological objections to this kind of 'colonialisation', see Conrad 2016, as well as Conrad's forthcoming essay, 'Everyone should be Greek in his own way: the global quest for beauty in the nineteenth century' (shown to me by the author, who provided permission for this mention); cf. also Masuzawa 2013, for an analogous objection to the category of 'world religions'.

5 See van Eck and Winters 2005; Davis 2011.

6 See, for instance, Apter 2013.

By way of tying together the thematics of this book, and given the way these themes also recur in the volume, my postscript offers some final thoughts on these three issues in turn.

I.

First, there is the justifiable dissatisfaction with what Hegel says about the study of arts (and, indeed, about the study of history) beyond the Graeco-Roman and Christian-western tradition. Or, for that matter, even from *within* the Graeco-Roman and Christian-western tradition – as Squire notes in his contribution – insofar as Hegel’s ‘ideas about the divine, the Incarnation, and the centrality of Christian faith’ can be said to have ultimately ‘ideological underpinnings’ in Hegel’s deeply Protestant thinking.⁷

As Whitney Davis notes in his contribution to this volume, it is ‘uncontroversial that for many art historians Hegel’s art history offers little – beyond fodder for post-colonial critiques – to the study of arts *outside* the Graeco-Roman and Christian-modern western traditions, including the arts of ancient Persia, India and Egypt to which Hegel devoted many words in his *Lectures on Fine Art* and elsewhere’. As even Hegel’s most ardent defenders recognise, Hegel is guilty of what we nowadays call ‘Orientalism’. At issue, then, is not whether Hegel’s lectures on fine art display cultural prejudices and empirical ignorance – they do. At issue is whether Hegel’s philosophical ‘science of art nevertheless offers something of worth to humanists – something without which our very conception of the humanities would be different – once the shortcomings of his writings on world history and world art are acknowledged and held, as it were, at arm’s length. In his recent treatment of these very same concerns, Terry Pinkard puts it this way: ‘Pointing out just how far from reality are Hegel’s characterizations of Africans, Chinese and other peoples is a bit too easy, a bit too much of an exercise of the proverbial shooting fish in a barrel. That neither excuses Hegel nor exonerates him, but once one has moved beyond the pros and cons of Hegel apologetics, it is more fruitful to ask what the philosophical

⁷ For a superb discussion of Hegel’s ‘Protestant’ education and formation, and its importance to his philosophical positions, cf. Dickey 1987.

views were behind his dismissive and admittedly Eurocentric view of the world ...'⁸

Davis takes up precisely that challenge in his chapter, and thus provides a helpful touchstone for considering such objections to Hegel's approach. In his examination of Hegel's treatment of Egyptian art – especially his criticism of Hegel's treatment of the symbolism of animals – Davis seeks 'to reconcile the anthropocentric narrative given by Hegel to [non Graeco-Roman] cultural traditions of the self-recognition of theriomorphic individuality and subjectivity'. That is, Davis sees Hegel's Eurocentrism as a form of anthropocentrism, visible in his privileging of a certain (Greek) kind of anthropomorphism in classical sculpture. For Davis, this amounts to an unwarranted restriction on what the proper image of the human is. Davis' worry, in other words, is not only that Hegel's account of the transition from symbolic to Egyptian to classical art (especially Greek sculpture) cannot withstand a robust encounter with the deliverances of 'a worldwide anthropology of art', but that Hegel's anthropology itself – in the privilege it gives, in its self-constitution, to the significance of the apprehension of a certain (Greek) image of the free-standing human form – is eminently correctable. 'In this (more inclusive) world history', Davis writes, 'the Absolute is *not* always seen on the model of a human being *even if* it is the inner depth of the world counter-reflecting the inner depth of humanity.'

This envoi is not the place to adjudicate such claims, but because Davis' contribution is in some ways the most contrarian within the context of this volume, it seems useful – editorially – to examine some implicit points of dialogue between Davis and other contributors on this very question. For instance, to better understand the significance of the human form in Hegel's discussion of classical Greek sculpture, Julia Peters suggests in her own contribution that 'there is an entire part of Hegel's mature system which is dedicated to showing that nature is in and of itself inherently spiritual: [namely] Hegel's Anthropology, the first part of his Philosophy of Subjective Spirit in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*'. On Peters' reading of Hegel, 'the task of classical art is to show that ... the inherently spiritual nature in question is human nature, [which is why] on Hegel's account classical art revolves around the human figure as its main form and content'. In Peters' view, however: 'Hegel abstains from attempting to give a reductive explanation of what makes human

⁸ Pinkard 2017, 52; cf. Squire's introduction to this volume, pp. 45–50.

bodily features apt for the manifestation of spirit, or to present and apply a positive, conceptual criterion for ideality.’ Rather than take the human body mimetically (‘as a model’, as Davis puts it), Hegel is said by Peters to take ‘a negative approach by describing in contrast which features are *detrimental* to ideality in a sculpture’. For Hegel, she argues (p. 121):

the manifestation of spirit in a human natural body is to a certain extent an irreducibly aesthetic property ... A classical Greek sculpture, then, insofar as it displays ideality, is on the one hand modeled after human nature. But it is not just a faithful replication of whatever the artist finds in human nature. Rather, it presents the human body in such a way that it is turned into as thorough a manifestation of spirit as possible – this is what it means to idealize it.

Davis notes this last point, too, when he points out that human beings are ‘representing’ as well as ‘sensing’ creatures, and so can make an idealising image of themselves in ways that animals cannot. What Davis wants to contest, however, is the uni-directionality of the developmental transition from symbolic to classical as ‘visible’ in the historical transition from the Egyptian jackal-headed Anubis to the Greek statue of an athlete in a fully human shape. For Davis (p. 88):

the Absolute is *not* always seen on the model of a human being *even if* it is the inner depth of the world counter-reflecting the inner depth of humanity. The bison, the lion, the jaguar or the jackal is – perhaps collectively *are* – the Absolute, as apprehended *as* and *by* a subjectivity that does not always display human shape.

That is, Davis sees no reason to accept Hegel’s claims about the supersession of Egyptian-symbolic art by Greek classical sculpture as ‘art proper’, because he finds the anthropological underpinnings of Hegel’s argument – which Peters offers as a justification for Hegel’s approach to Greek sculpture – to be themselves suspect.

Readers of this volume can decide for themselves whether Peters’ reading of Hegel’s anthropology answers Davis’ concerns. In the context of this envoi, however, I wish to note that, if the terrain on which a debate over the right kind of art-historical narrative connecting the jackal-headed Anubis to the Greek statue of a human athlete is a consideration of how the sensuous embodiment of the Absolute undergoes intelligible transformations in formal features over time – and if it matters to that debate

whether the artwork grasps the ‘human’ in ‘animal’ form or not – then the debate itself is already Hegelian, meaningful only within the kind of philosophical-anthropological framework Hegel offers.⁹

I would like to offer one further editorial intervention on these issues. It is true that, for Hegel, the most appropriate content of sculpture – of art proper – is the free-standing human body, as both Davis and Peters note. But Hegel thinks that the *artform* of sculpture also teaches us something about the significance, to our overall self-understanding, of our apprehension of the human form in those *statues* that is not just available anthropologically – not available, that is, only via an anthropological apprehension of the human form. The debate between Davis and Peters over Hegel’s underlying anthropology and its significance for his philosophy of art illuminates, in other words, only part of Hegel’s story. After all, Hegel also goes out of his way to present art (a dimension of Absolute Spirit) as a form of understanding that comprehends the anthropological stance (a dimension of Subjective Spirit), not the other way around.

At issue for Hegel, then, is not only the appropriate content for art (human or animal *Gestalt*) but also the *form* in which that content is grasped (in this case, the human *Gestalt* wrought of dead nature, marble, stone). For Hegel, it is true, the human body is the proper content of classical sculpture – ‘[that which] in nature belongs to the spiritual in and for itself’ (Hegel, 1975, 78) – but it is also true that the human body, despite appearances, does not belong to the art *form* itself since the statue is not living flesh, but rather dead nature, heavy matter: or, more precisely, dead nature that has received the ‘baptism of the spiritual’. Art’s task, as Hegel

⁹ T.J. Clark makes a related point in his contribution to this volume, when he remarks on Hegel’s treatment of ‘the art of the ancient Near East, from geometry and inscribed ornament to organism and animal vitality’ in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Clark writes (p. 242): ‘As an attempt to comprehend the relation between the divine and the animal in Egyptian art, and above all to understand the full meaning of Egyptian art’s *stylization* of the natural world – its melting of “the internal dispositions of animal life ... into its surface” – [Hegel’s reading] remains incomparable. What it says may be wrong, even appallingly wrong. But this is because it sets itself the right kind of question – that posed by the full difficulty of the objects addressed – to which a genuine answer is obliged to be recklessly hermeneutic. When I read the *Phenomenology*, in other words, I am with Francis Bacon in believing that “truth emerges more readily from error than from confusion” – or from art-historical sorting and labeling, which sets the real alienness of Form aside.’

sees it, is to 'bring the spiritual before our eyes in a sensuous manner' – which, in the case of the statues under consideration, means in stone or marble as forming an external shape. I take this to mean that, for Hegel, inanimate nature (hard material) appears reanimated in statues; while the reappearance of *Geist* (the human *Gestalt*) in Greek sculpture satisfies (more fully than do prior works) *Geist*'s demand to grasp itself in the inflexible foreignness of dead nature. But this also means that classical art presumes and embodies a grasping of nature's *spiritlessness* – its deadness, lifelessness – as that which *Geist* must somehow endeavour to overcome (never fully successfully) in order to know itself. Hegel's 'classical art' thus seems to me also to be the art of *Geist* disturbed by its perception of dead nature's inanimacy, disturbed by the perception of *death* as natural and by the perception of nature as a realm of decay and destruction. Unlike the fashioning of mummies or care for the dead – wherein *Geist* responds to the natural 'fact' of death by seeming to grasp it in a human 'deed' – the art proper to sculpture embodies *Geist*'s constitutive inability to bear its alienation from nature, even as that alienation (and our inability to bear it) at the same time is now grasped as a fundamental condition of *Geist*'s own existence – which *Geist* must not only ritually confront but also 'work through' in art proper.

Let me next draw attention to another, related dialogue that emerges in the pages of this volume. 'In order to reconcile the anthropocentric narrative given by Hegel to cultural traditions of the self-recognition of theriomorphic individuality and subjectivity', writes Davis, 'we would have to jettison Hegel's view of animals (both in nature and as represented in works of art) as "inexpressive" – as not showing inner life.' But was it, finally, Hegel's view that animals 'as represented in works of art' do not show 'inner life'? And if not, then was Hegel's Eurocentrism really restricted by its supposed anthropomorphism, after all?

In his treatment of Théodore Géricault's 'Head of a White Horse' [Fig. 7.5], 1816–1817, Robert Pippin sees a visual manifestation of Hegel's dual claims about subjectivity and painting. What is so arresting about Géricault's painting, writes Pippin, is (p. 234):

the incontrovertible subjectivity or deep interiority of the horse, *literally visible* as if facing and seeking the 'other' without which for Hegel, it cannot be the subject it is, and unsure about finding such a realization ... One easily imagines that the horse is looking at a human being, in an expression understandably wary, figuring not only species wariness but an omnipresent human wariness too.

Like Peters, Pippin also emphasises that at issue for Hegel is not the isomorphic appropriateness of horse-form or human-form in any ‘model-like’ sense, but rather the achievement of a distinctive kind of intelligibility *in* the sensuous embodiment of the artwork for a human beholder.¹⁰ ‘We see expressed’, writes Pippin, ‘on the two-dimensional surface, the horse’s subjectivity; its interiority is visible and, one has to say, “felt”, even as it remains to-be-found, present as not present ... it presents the same inner-outer dynamic ... about animality, species relations, wildness, and domesticity, trust, fear, even pride – and all of this not conceptually or discursively, but ... following Hegel, affectively intelligible.’

Of course, Géricault is historically far downstream from the ancient Egyptian material which Davis treats, and it is worth asking whether Hegel himself would have endorsed the interpretation of Géricault’s horse that Pippin provides. Not because the worth of Pippin’s interpretation should be judged by whether it is faithful enough to the letter of Hegel’s text, of course, but precisely because Pippin’s interpretation forces us to raise the right kinds of questions *about* Hegel’s text – not just to ‘get right’ what Hegel said, but to get at *why* he said it, and at what it might mean for us (two centuries later) that Hegel said what he said.

After all, Pippin’s own view is that the fine art of painting continued through Hegel’s day, and continues in some sense even through the modernist revolution of Manet and Cézanne (arguably the most radical break in the history of painting), contrary to Hegel’s own claims about art’s having become ‘a thing the past’.¹¹ That Géricault horse is a masterful *painting* seems incontrovertible; but the larger question – for Davis, as for Pippin, as for Hegel – is whether that painting amounts to something like *fine art*, whether it achieves the kind of cognitive work without which

10 Fred Rush also argues, in his contribution to this volume, that ‘what makes such perception of *beauty* [in Dutch still lifes] possible for Hegel is an isomorphism between one form of life and another: between the liveliness of the object and a conscious form of liveliness that is responsive to that liveliness’. And in a similar vein, Hanneke Grootenboer’s contribution extends this to Hegel’s discussion of natural landscapes – ‘The transformation of a three-dimensional landscape into a two-dimensional picture that creates the illusion of nature, rather than actual nature enables us to reflect on it.’ Colours and shapes in paintings, she notes, ‘are never meant to replace actual objects, but their transformation into images ... invite(s) our contemplation’. And this is true, she argues, even when the painting is a painting of a photograph.

11 See Pippin 2014; for a discussion, see my contribution to this volume.

we humans might be unintelligible to ourselves. To put the question the other way around: does such an artform (oil on canvas) in its proffering such a content (*that* horse) make manifest something of unavoidable significance for human self-understanding? Or, does the painting's significance manifest only as what Davis calls 'unbounded morphological productivity in the particulars' as 'reciprocal of the unavailability of their universal to absolutely clear conception'?¹²

By the same token, we should ask whether, or how, the practice of painting allows for the perception of 'inner life' in the 'faces' of animals, as distinct from what we can 'see' in the three-dimensional jackal-headed Anubis, in ways which draw us into the meaning of Hegel's art-historical-developmental account of the emergence of romantic art out of classical and symbolic art in terms of the supersession of sculpture by painting. Furthermore, even if it is granted that painting *has* realised something of fundamental cognitive importance for human beings in its historical development, then does it follow that painting, contra Hegel's own view, continues to do so into Hegel's time and beyond? I will try to say a bit more about these questions toward the end of this short intervention.

II.

As mentioned at the outset, there is a second, deeper scepticism about Hegel's philosophy of fine art: an ethos of cultural relativism in the contemporary humanities at large is now manifest in doubts about the very existence of 'fine art'. Again, think for example of the rise of 'visual studies' or 'cultural-media studies' – and their eschewal of any reference to 'art'.¹³ That is, there is abiding scepticism that there even *are* works of universal significance for human cognition, works which are hence not just reflective of localised cultural outlooks, nor just pieces of 'historical-cultural productions and practices' of a more generalised sort from which any number of various interesting conclusions might be drawn. Davis, as just mentioned, takes a sceptical position when he suggests that: 'Unbounded morphological productivity in the particulars is the reciprocal of the unavailability of their universal to absolutely clear conception.'

¹² 'Perhaps', says Davis, begging the questions I am trying to get into view, 'one might have advised Hegel to leave his entire philosophy of art just there'.

¹³ Cf. Squire's introduction to this volume, esp. pp. 50–51.

There are a number reasons for this scepticism about the fine arts – and, indeed, about the value of hermeneutic approaches to artworks, which look not only for embodied reflections of the values of human societies at some time or place, but for a matrix for the understanding of the deepest self-understanding of those societies, all with a view toward the even larger questions of how we come to understand ourselves, to make ourselves intelligible in an incipiently collective ‘world-historical’ way.

One reason for this scepticism, nowadays at least, is that new technologies – photography, film, digital media – manifestly proliferate in ways which seem to break decisively with the coherence of any past tradition of art-making. For Hegel, and for much of the nineteenth century, the effects of this transformation in the conditions of human productivity had not yet made themselves felt. But now, goes one line of thinking, the best we can do is to consider how the specific limitations of various technical media or instruments are being developed and explored in a range of social-cultural practices, across eras. As David Wellbery has recently observed, while the nineteenth century witnessed the expanding influence of Hegel’s idealist historical-narrative philosophy of art, recent decades have instead witnessed a kind of return to pre-Hegelian Enlightenment aesthetics – to the *Laocoon* of Lessing, to Kantian ‘beauty’ and neo-Kantian ‘aesthetic categories’, for instance – alongside the rise of ‘media studies’, in light of the development of ‘technological media that shape and extend our sensate capacities’ in ways that are seen to call for a renewed attention to notions of ‘medium-specificity’, but without Hegel’s historical-systematic framing (symbolic, classical, romantic) of the different arts; and, indeed, in ways that are ‘resistant to hermeneutic appropriation’.¹⁴

Another reason is that the *kind* of inquiry to which Hegel’s science of art aspires can seem an overblown response to the basic questions his lectures raise. As Pippin notes in his contribution to this volume, Hegel’s ambitions allow him to advance powerful theses about such fundamental questions as: what sense can we make out of the fact, that there are many arts; architecture, painting, music, poetry? Or, what does it mean, what sense can we make of the fact, that the ideals and standards of art-making change so dramatically in different societies and at different times? And as Pippin goes on to observe (p. 211):

¹⁴ Wellbery 2005, 211. For more on the resistance of art to hermeneutic appropriation, see Gumbrecht 2004. On the return of ‘beauty’, see Nehemas 2000; on ‘new’ aesthetic categories, see Steiner 2001 and Ngai 2015.

the answer to both questions might well be: we can make no sense out of the variety of the arts. That is a contingent and wholly accidental fact that raises no interesting philosophical question. And while the second question, what does it mean that aesthetic ideals change, might be an interesting question, it too is not a philosophical or 'aesthetics' question, is not relevant to any interrogation of the nature and value of art in itself. It is a question for social historians and for them alone.

In the terms offered by Hegel, such a sceptical position amounts to saying not only that there is no such thing as 'art proper', but also that there *never was* any such thing as *schöne Kunst* – much less a 'beautiful' 'art proper' that is manifest, as Hegel claims, above all in the artworks of classical Greece. What a global history of art teaches, from this point of view, is that there are (or have been) only various kinds of 'symbolic' production, which take unboundedly various forms in different times and places. Davis, for instance, takes this to amount to 'the unavoidable doubt whether there *is* a problem in the very first place' – that is, to 'doubt about the presence of symbol; doubt about the symbol of presence', or what Davis calls the 'primal doubt' as to whether there really *is* any question of universal (human) meaning posed by the production of, say, Egyptian funerary practices, Egyptian architecture or Egyptian writing.

It is easy to appreciate why a certain ethos of cultural relativism is methodologically necessary for the historian (or archaeologist, or anthropologist, or ethnographer or 'cultural studies' scholar). Like the natural scientist, she must test hypotheses or 'hunches' about cultural-historical processes or products, without deciding in advance *which* objects of study might yield the deepest insights for a particular purview or within a field of study. Everything should be on the table, in other words, and distinctions between 'fine art' and 'less-than-fine-art' seem to work counter to that principle – insofar as they are seen to amount to mere cultural prejudices that impede the objective aims of any human-scientific inquiry.

Still, we should remember that different methodologies in the human sciences are not just neutral-objective means for studying various historical or cultural objects; different methods of human inquiry are as much conceptions of objects of study as they are tools for their assessment. The questions and answers we offer whenever figuring something out also shape whatever we are trying to know. In treating an expanding and open-ended variety of cultural objects and historical phenomena, then, we *also* need to ask what these things themselves are 'thinking

about' – how they might make sense of us, of our inquiry, not just how we might make sense of them. That fine artworks are not just objects of scientific inquiry – that fine artworks are themselves sensuous modes of apprehension, achievements in the human struggle to make our world and ourselves intelligible – is indeed what Hegel's art-historical philosophical 'science of art' sets out to demonstrate. Lacking this kind of self-aware 'scientific' approach, which Hegel urged his students to adopt, the possible virtues of broadened cultural inquiry in the humanities can quickly turn from doubts about whether there is such a thing as 'fine art' – sensuous embodiments of the highest vocation to make human life and its world intelligible – into a self-defeating scepticism about the very possibility of human knowing.¹⁵ As Hegel put it:¹⁶

What we are dealing with in logic is not a thinking *about* something which exists independently as a base for our thinking and apart from it, nor forms which are supposed to provide mere signs or distinguishing marks of truth; on the contrary, the necessary forms and self-determinations of thought are the content and the ultimate truth itself.

III.

This takes me to the third issue that I want to discuss, namely the validity of Hegel's own historical approach, in what he calls his 'science of art'. In contrast to many of his contemporaries, Hegel strove to provide stringent criteria for what counts as fine art – that is, an account of *which* works merit the attention which Hegel lavishes upon them, and *why*, from the 'scientific' point of view of Hegel's historical narrative.¹⁷ In this sense, with

15 To ward off such scepticism, Hegel tells his students that 'this much at least will be granted at once, that Spirit is capable of considering itself and of possessing a consciousness, a *thinking* consciousness, of itself and everything originating in itself' (Hegel 1975, 12).

16 Hegel 2010, §54.

17 This is not to say that Hegel's actual account *lives up* to his own criteria: the assumption of this volume, in putting art history in dialogue with Hegel, is to take up challenges of doing Hegelian 'science' without giving Hegel himself the final word on the specific art-historical claims involved in meeting that challenge.

respect to the stated ambitions of his philosophy of fine art, as Sebastian Gardner notes in his contribution to this volume, Hegel stood apart from his contemporary philosophers of art in several ways.

The idea common to Hegel's 'Philosophical-Romantic' contemporaries writes Gardner, 'is that works of art have a content or cognitive meaning, of a kind which discursive thought can recuperate once it has been made available by the artwork, but which could not have been originally secured by discursive means, and which cannot be validated discursively without reference back to the (experience of the) artwork'. We can see this most readily in F.W.J. Schelling's claim that artworks display the actual unity of the sensible and supersensible, of Nature and Freedom:¹⁸

If aesthetic intuition is merely transcendental intuition become objective, it is self-evident that art is at once the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy, which ever and again continues to speak to us of what philosophy cannot depict in external form [...] Art is paramount to the philosopher [*Die Kunst ist eben deßwegen dem Philosophen das Höchste*].

Hegel seems to agree with Schelling when he says that *Geist* 'generates out of itself works of fine art as the first reconciling middle term between pure thought and what is merely external, sensuous, and transient, between nature and finite reality and the infinite freedom of conceptual thinking' (Hegel 1975, 8). However, as that phrase 'first reconciling middle term' indicates, Hegel in fact rejects Schelling's view of art as 'ever and again [speaking] to us of what philosophy cannot depict'. Art, for Hegel, had been just that – a middle term between external sensuousness and the realisation of pure thinking. Moreover – as Gardner points out – Hegel 'also rejects the distinct, weaker version of Philosophical Romanticism according to which the cognitive achievement of art can be matched by philosophy *without* being superseded'. Hegel's philosophy of art should thus, Gardner claims, be seen to assert 'the point in the development of spirit at which certain competing, aestheticist forms of post-Kantianism are seen off'.

Unlike the Romantics, then, who esteemed art precisely because of its alleged ongoing parity with, or superiority to, philosophy as a mode

¹⁸ Schelling 1978, 231.

of cognition, Hegel thought that our rising esteem for art as a fundamental form of human cognition was only justified because art's highest vocation in this regard was now a 'thing of the past' [*ein Vergangenes*]. 'It cannot be concluded without further ado', Gardner suggests, 'that Hegel is simply wrong about art's loss of vocation, since the option remains of construing his theory as essentially revisionary, as a critique of modern art-consciousness or tendencies within it, and perhaps also ... in a way that explains the persistence of Romanticism.'

Gardner's intriguing suggestion – that Hegel's loss of art thesis anticipates the persistence of Romanticism in our own day, *both* within philosophies of art *and* in modern art's own attempts at self-justification and self-understanding – tumbles into the concerns of my own contribution, in which I argue that we who work in the contemporary *Geisteswissenschaften* have more to gain from supposing that Hegel and Shakespeare were right about art's historical loss of vocation than from supposing that they were wrong, or from supposing that art continues indefinitely as a supreme need of *Geist*.

Rather than return to my own contribution, however, let me try to come full circle – and return to Davis' provocative claim: 'Unbounded morphological productivity in the particulars is the reciprocal of the unavailability of their universal to absolutely clear conception.' I want to return to this claim, because there is a way in which Davis' statement – although Davis himself might disagree – is almost a Hegelian thought.

I say 'almost', because Hegel's thought, in this regard, was more historically situated than that of Davis. For Hegel, 'unbounded morphological productivity in the particulars' is not the mark of 'the unavailability of their universal to absolutely clear conception' as a matter of ahistorical principle. Rather, such unbounded productivity is itself one way in which we have taught ourselves – *in the making of those products*, over time – that fine art practices are not adequate in perpetuity to the demands of sensuously apprehending the Absolute.

After all, our *current* apprehension of the unavailability of the Absolute to any formally appropriate sensuous embodiment is itself one reason why Hegel (already two centuries ago) saw fine art's highest vocation as having become a thing of the past. That is, for Hegel, the history of 'unbounded morphological productivity in the particulars' – a.k.a. the long historical parade of the production of sensuous forms that the *Lectures* examine, running from pre-art symbolic artefacts down through 'art proper' and its 'dissolution' up through (we can now add, after Hegel) modernism and our increasing apprehension of unbounded,

global morphological productivity – is itself one way in which we have taught ourselves, over time, that a future in which art’s becoming past (as registered *in, by* and *as* ‘art-project’) does not necessarily mean a future in which the fundamental needs of *Geist* no longer require sensuous form – or ‘unbounded morphological productivity’. But the history of art, in Hegel’s view, points to a future in which our primary sensuous forms of reflection – in their highest vocation – are no longer recognisable as artistic. Such a future requires, Hegel thought, that art recognisably become past – just as he also thought that our recognition of this pastness went hand in hand with the way in which art *taught* us these lessons over time. Our philosophical esteem for art rises, Hegel thought, when art’s highest vocation becomes past.

Of course, there are many further discussions and disagreements to be aired about this. But perhaps the highest compliment to be paid to the strength of Hegel’s philosophy of art is not – as the truism about ‘imitation being the sincerest form of flattery’ has it – that Hegel’s philosophy of art has inspired so many imitations and rooted itself so deeply in our own orthodoxies in the humanities. Instead, that so many have felt compelled to refute Hegel is perhaps the surest sign of the enduring significance of Hegel’s *Lectures*.

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- 38 Dietrich Boschung, Julian Jachmann (Hrsg.), *Selbstentwurf. Das Architektenhaus von der Renaissance bis zur Gegenwart*, 2018. ISBN 978-3-7705-6281-7.

PLATES



1 James Stephanoff, *An Assemblage of Works of Art from the Earliest Period to the Time of Pheidias*, c. 1845 (74.3 × 62.2 cm). Drawing and watercolour on paper. London: British Museum, inv. 1994.1210.6. © Trustees of the British Museum. (= Fig. 1.3.)



2a Pieter Claesz, *Still Life with Oysters*, c. 1633 (37.8 × 53.2 cm).
Oil on wood. Kassel: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, inv. GK 437.
© bpk Bildagentur / Kunstsammlungen, Kassel / Art Resource,
New York. (= Fig. 5.4.)



2b Willem Kalf, *Still Life with the Drinking-Horn of the Saint Sebastian Archers' Guild, Lobster and Glasses*, c. 1653 (6.4 × 102.2 cm).
Oil on canvas. London: National Gallery, inv. BG6444. © National
Gallery, London / Art Resource, New York. (= Fig. 5.8.)



3 Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder, *Still Life of Flowers in a Wan-Li Vase on a Ledge with Flowers, Shells and a Butterfly*, 1609–1610 (68.6 × 50.7 cm).

Oil on copper. London: National Gallery, inv. NG6613. © National Gallery, London / Art Resource, New York. (= Fig. 5.6.)



4 Théodore Géricault, *Head of a White Horse*, c. 1815 (65.5 × 54.5 cm). Oil on canvas. Paris: Musée du Louvre, inv. RF544. © Erich Lessing / Art Resource, New York. (= Fig. 7.5.)



5a Richard Estes, *Central Savings*, 1975 (91.4 × 121.9 cm). Oil on canvas. Kansas City: The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Gift of the Friends of Art, inv. F75-13. Photograph by Jamison Miller. (= Fig. 6.1.)



5b Henri Matisse, *Le tapis rouge*, 1906 (116 × 89 cm). Oil on canvas. Grenoble: Musée de Grenoble. Wikimedia Commons. (= Fig. 8.3.)



6 Caspar David Friedrich, *Chalk Cliffs at Rügen*, 1818 (90.5×71 cm). Oil on canvas, Winterthur, Museum Oskar Reinhart am Stadtgarten. © bpk Bildagentur / Museum Oskar Reinhart am Stadtgarten, Winterthur / Hermann Buresch (photographer) / Art Resource, New York. (= Fig. 8.4.)



7 Georges Pierre Seurat, *Le Crotoy, Upstream*, 1889 (70.5 × 86.7 cm). Oil on canvas. Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, inv. 70.183. © Detroit Institute of Arts, USA (Bequest of Robert H. Tannahill)/ Bridgeman Images. (= Fig. 8.6.)



8 Georges Pierre Seurat, *The Channel of Gravelines, Petit Fort Philippe*, 1890 (73.3 × 92.7 cm). Oil on canvas. Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art. Wikimedia Commons. (= Fig. 8.7.)



9 Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) - The Morning after the Deluge - Moses writing the Book of Genesis*, c. 1843 (78.5 × 78.5 cm). Oil on canvas. London: Tate Gallery, inv. No0532.
© Tate, London / Art Resource, New York. (= Fig. 8.8.)



10a Claude Monet, *La Gare Saint-Lazare: les signaux*, 1877 (65 × 81 cm).
Oil on canvas. Hannover, Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum.
© Erich Lessing / Art Resource, New York. (= Fig. 8.10.)



10b Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, *Rocks in the Forest of Fontainebleau*, c. 1860–1865
(46 × 59 cm). Oil on canvas. Washington: National Gallery of Art, inv. 1963.10.110.
Wikimedia Commons. Reproduced in colour as Plate 10b. (= Fig. 8.11.)



11 Paul Cézanne, *House in Provence*, c. 1885 (65 × 81 cm). Oil on canvas. Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art, inv. 45.194. Wikimedia Commons. (= Fig. 8.12.)



12 Claude Monet, *Poplars (Wind Effect)*, 1891 (100 × 74.5 cm). Oil on canvas. Paris: Musée d'Orsay, inv. RF2002-30. © RMN-Grand Palais (Photographer: Hervé Lewandowski) / Art Resource, New York. (= Fig. 8.13.)



13 Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire from Les Lauves*, c. 1906 (60 × 73 cm). Oil on canvas. Moscow: Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 3339. © HIP / Art Resource, New York. (= Fig. 8.14.)



14 Louise Bourgeois, *End of Softness*, 1967 (17.8 × 51.8 × 38.7 cm). Bronze with gold patina. Owned by the Easton Foundation. © The Easton Foundation / VAGA, New York / BONO, Oslo 2017; photograph by Christopher Burke. (= Fig. 10.3.)



15 Louise Bourgeois, *Germinal*, 1967 (14.3 × 18.7 × 15.9 cm). Marble. Owned by the Easton Foundation. © The Easton Foundation / VAGA, New York / BONO, Oslo 2017; photograph by Allan Finkelman. (= Fig. 10.4.)



16 Yayoi Kusama, *Snake*, 1974 (30.5 × 650.2 × 25.4 cm). Mixed media. Private collection, © Yayoi Kusama. (= Fig. 10.7.)

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