# Artistic Research

*Delusions, Confusions and Differentiations*

Früchtl, J.

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Josef Früchtl
Faculty of Humanities
University of Amsterdam

# Artistic Research: Delusions, Confusions and Differentiations

Abstract:

Concerning artistic research, the state of affairs is still one of delusions and confusions. The reason for this is the pluralization and dedifferentiation of rationality pushed forward by the postmodern period. The way out of it is the way of differentiations. Thus, it seems helpful, first, to remember what we already have in philosophical aesthetics, namely four basic models of art and knowledge. The question, then, is whether artistic research fits into (one of) these models. To my mind, it does – though in a new way. Secondly, it is helpful to have a short sober sociological look at the situation. Finally, we have to ask the question about the kind of research that is at stake in artistic research. Here, the meaning of non-propositional knowledge and Kant's idea of an as-if-knowledge is useful. All in all, artistic research still fails in giving a sufficient explanation of itself.

Delusions, Confusions

*Delusions, Confusions* is the title of a novel by Theodor Fontane which has become proverbial, at least in the original German *(Irrungen, Wirrungen)*. Set at the end of the nineteenth century, it addresses the popular literary theme of love thwarted by differences in social class, and rejects with a sober conservatism the idea that love is powerful enough to overcome all obstacles. There can be no union between an aristocrat and a seamstress in the given social circumstances. Ultimately the two protagonists do marry, but as befits their different ranks, and go on to lead a life in which each of them, to use Fontane's words, has "a little bit of happiness and

marital tranquility". The author also provides a general sociocultural explanation for his story, namely that "our background determines our actions. Whoever obeys that may fall, but he will fall in a better way than whoever contradicts it."[1] For Fontane, there can be no talk of true happiness here. He can only see two types of unhappiness: the first obediently remains within the restrictions of the status quo, leaving everything as it is; the other flouts these restrictions and seeks to outstrip them, indeed outwit them. The first type of unhappiness is lived by conservatives, the second by revolutionaries. According to Fontane, the first is better than the second. He is therefore concerned with how best to be unhappy, or how best to fall, which is the same question that later occupied Samuel Beckett, albeit by then existentialistically and no longer in purely socio-philosophical terms.

Anyone who tries to gain an overview or deeper insight into what for about twenty years has been termed "artistic research"[2] will enter a miniature complex of delusions and confusions, sometimes reminiscent of a labyrinth with no exit, at other times reminiscent of a ghost train containing artistic horrors (artistic research then appearing as a "methodical sense for disturbances"[3]), but usually reminiscent of surfing the internet, a certainly directional, yet enjoyably distracting buzzing around in an endless discussion room. It is no coincidence that such associations in the recent past, as we remember well, were linked to a far more comprehensive, discourse-determining phenomenon, namely Postmodernism. In this case, too, it was easy to form the impression that a ghost was involved, about whom everyone was talking but nobody had actually seen. And thus today many people – especially art theorists and curators – talk about artistic research, although nobody can say exactly what it is.[4]

One reason for this is surely the expansion and weakening, pluralization and dedifferentiation of the concept of rationality, which manifested itself in the philosophy and scientific theory of the twentieth century and achieved its climax in the Postmodernism dispute. When what is understood as reason encompasses a multitude of different forms, and when in addition all these forms have the same rights, then not only do reason inherent to the natural sciences, to the arts, social sciences and cultural sciences encounter each other on an equal footing, but the same is true of aesthetic and scientific reason in general. Taking the step to maintain that art and science not only touch at specific points, overlap in segments and sometimes impact each other to a specific end, but also form a veritable synthesis – art *is* research, research *is* art – is then not a surprising move. Meanwhile, there is a simple and practical reason to talk about artistic research, namely the fact that this talk has found its way into academic and art institutions. Artistic research has become an institutional fact, and now we as theorists have to ask ourselves the more what to do about it.

Let me cite an example from the more recent discussion. It is no exaggeration or simplification to say that it stands *pars pro toto* in its efforts to grasp artistic research or, more accurately, a researching art in descriptive and theoretical terms. I favor the formulation "researching art" because what is known as artistic research

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1) Theodor Fontane, *Irrungen, Wirrungen*, with annotations by Frederick Betz (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2010), chapter 14; on moderate happiness in marriage, see chapter 22.

2) Since 2005 an increasing number of books on this topic have been appearing in English, French and German; at about the same time the theme acquired an institutional basis in various European countries. Cf. the corresponding list compiled by Henk Borgdorff, "Wo stehen wir in der künstlerischen Forschung?," in *Können Künstler Forscher sein?*, eds. Janet Rittermann, Gerald Bast, and Jürgen Mittelstraß (Vienna: Springer 2011), 29–55, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-7091-0753-9_4.

3) Anette Baldauf and Ana Hoffner, "Methodischer Störsinn," in *Künstlerische Forschung. Ein Handbuch*, eds. Jens Badura (Zürich and Berlin: Diaphanes, 2015), 81–84.

4) Cf. Daniel Hornuff, "Kann Kunst forschen?," *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, vol. 59, no. 2 (2014), 225, https://doi.org/10.28937/1000106242; on the ghost of Postmodernity, see cf. Hans Robert Jauß, "Der literarische Prozess des Modernismus von Rousseau bis Adorno," in *Adorno-Konferenz 1983*, eds. Ludwig von Friedeburg and Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), 95ff.

is primarily concerned not with a new version of aesthetic theory, not with the question which last plagued Theodor Adorno and Postmodernism regarding the extent to which theory can be or can become aesthetic, but with the reverse question, namely the extent to which art can claim to be theoretical. I acknowledge the mostly serious intentions behind such efforts. I understand their emphatic, even priestly tone, for scientific and cultural politics mean blasting asunder the bastion of traditional thought. But I cannot, quite literally, even begin to understand the confusions which arise from their random combination of theoretical fragments.

In the present case this begins harmlessly with the ascertainment that artistic research creates an "open space for thoughts", in which artists can ponder their actions in self-reflection and without the burden of the marketplace. Accordingly, the link to research permits art to remove itself from industrial pressures, especially from the *Creative Industry* so much talked about today.[5] However, at the same time there is talk of a "tension" between art and science, and then again of an "intersection" between these two autonomous areas which could be interesting (F, 41). Next the metaconcept of an "aesthetic basic research" is named, which is concerned amongst other things with "the development of methods" using "aesthetic processes of knowledge" (F, 43). This large-calibre concept is immediately played down, however, with the information that "research" here means all original and innovative works. From an epistemological perspective, finally, it is emphasized that perception and a "comprehending engaging" with an object is "more important" than an explanation (F, 46). In addition, the difference between *knowing that* and *knowing how*, between propositional and non-propositional, explicit and implicit knowledge is pointed out, and it is added that artistic research "mainly" takes place within the field of non-propositional knowledge (F, 46). I shall return to this later. More relevant to the philosophy of science is the indication that there are overlaps with the arts and with the social sciences, for example in the field of action research, and with applied research, when it is concerned with the improvement of materials (F, 47). This level of modesty then once again makes way for a bold hypothesis, namely that artistic research concerns, "the foundations of our perception, our understanding and our relationship to the world" (F, 48), before culminating in a *locus classicus* of philosophical aesthetics: "Artistic research is not concerned with theory, but with thoughts… It creates space for the unthought, the unexpected" (F, 48).

## Models of Arts and Knowledge

As we have known for quite some time, it is deemed appropriate for thoughtful people to find themselves in a state of confusion from time to time. But it is not appropriate for them to remain in this state. They should at the very least be in a position to say how they got into this state, and where exactly the confusion lies. Turning this into a guideline for the corresponding status of the discussion in philosophy and aesthetics is therefore helpful. This *state of affairs* offers not a simple, but a multi-differentiated picture. In the compromised form in which I shall present it here, it will no doubt be about as attractive as the X-ray image of a beautiful body. But I cannot think of a different or simpler way to make it available.

Let us therefore assure ourselves. In our western thinking, the relationship between science and art is subject to change. I believe that four basic models can be systematically distinguished.[6]

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5) Borgdorff, "Wo stehen wir in der künstlerischen Forschung?," 41. Hereafter this work will be cited in the main text as F followed by page number. All English translations are made by Sarah L. Kirkby.

6) Here I once again expand on and vary a suggestive approach, which can be traced back to an outline in Christiane Schildknecht and Dieter Teichert, "Einleitung," in *Philosophie in Literatur*, eds. Christiane Schildknecht and Dieter Teichert (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996), 11ff.; cf. my first elaboration, which deviates from the variant here, in: Josef Früchtl, "Konzeptionen des Scheins. Ausgänge aus der Platonischen Höhle," *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 45, no. 2 (2001): 167–187.

First, we have the *antagonism model*. It occurs in two variants. Plato, in the famous 10th book of his *Politeia* stands for the one variant, Nietzsche – a particular Nietzsche – for the other. Here it is always a case of either-or: either philosophy or art. Both together, regardless of whichever relativization, is just not an option. Either philosophy dismisses art with an anti-sophistic, scientific claim or – as Nietzsche is frequently wont to do – *vice versa*.

Second, we encounter the *compensation* or *complementarity model*. Here, philosophy or science on the one hand, and art on the other, are each valid in their own way. In their mutually complementary relationship, the weighting of the two sides permits three possibilities: either art weighs more, or philosophy/science weighs more, or both weigh the same. For a heavier weighting of art, we can philosophically turn to Schelling and his *System of Transcendental Idealism* from 1800, in which he elevates art to the "organon" of philosophy. For a heavier weighting of philosophy (as the highest form of science) we have, in contrast, Hegel. For him, philosophy and art, alongside religion, initially possess equal rights; each addresses the self-image of an epoch or a culture in its own way, namely graphically-sensually on the one hand, and representationally-conceptually on the other. However, Hegel adds a relativization in historical terms, for in his opinion art, as a sensually-based medium, can no longer fulfil its truth function under the abstract conditions of Modernity. For an equal weighting of both sides in practice, Theodor W. Adorno seems to be a suitable representative. For him, too, art and philosophy are both media of truth, but each with striking advantages and disadvantages. Art brings truth – that truth which occurs with an absolute claim to validity – to a sensual appearance, but remains subject to deceit; philosophy, in contrast, like science speaks out the truth discursively, in a manner free of deceit, *clare et distincte*, but because of its very discursive nature fails to fulfil the characteristic of the whole truth. Since the failing on both sides cannot be eliminated by a third way, a synthesis, the only possible solution is to create a balance by continually swapping back and forth between the two.

Closely related to Adorno's variant of the compensation or complementarity model is – third – the *agony* or *difference model*. Here, too, art forms a sphere of a very different kind, in contrast to the spheres of science, morality and so forth, and yet here the difference is so extreme that there are either only very indirect possibilities of bridging and influencing, or none at all. Art and science here stand alongside one another (relatively) unconnected, as largely incomparable, and as incommensurable as paradigmatic scientific theories, according to Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend, or, according to Jean-François Lyotard, as agonal as a conflict between two parties where there is no rule of judgment which can be used for both, and which therefore must be recognized as an "antagonism" (*différend*). In the German-language literature, this position is represented most insistently by Karl Heinz Bohrer, who fights untiringly against any cognitive or moral deployment of aesthetic literature.[7] Also very effective in this context are Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. According to their last joint book, *What is philosophy?*, and in contrast to their earlier book, *A Thousand Plateaus*, science proceeds in discursively presented propositions. In contrast, art is founded on pre-conceptual perceptions cleansed of all things conventional. It is, so to speak, a power house of affects to be experienced contemplatively. But "interferences" take place between these two areas. Very similar to Adorno, Deleuze and Guattari state that art is incomplete without theory/philosophy and vice versa. In *What is philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari cite examples pointing to the findings of artistic research, for example that of Gustav Theodor Fechner, the founder of experimental, empirical-inductive aesthetics, who tries to grasp conceptually the area of pre-conceptual sensations, the stimuli of colors and sounds in which art is specialized; another example is abstract art, such as that of Paul Klee, which

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7)  Cf. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge* (London and New York: New Left Books [Verso], 1975); Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges van den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Karl Heinz Bohrer, *Plötzlichkeit. Zum Augenblick des ästhetischen Scgheins* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981).

demonstrates how artists try to create "pure sensations" from what science terms a "function" and philosophy terms a "concept". Of course, these interferences are "external" since the interfering discipline, completely in line with system theory, "must use its own means". In addition, Deleuze and Guattari refer briefly to two other forms of interference: "non-localizable" interference, in which every discipline is "in reference to a negative", which simply means that art requires non-art, and science requires non-science; and "internal" interference, which is ultimately "subtle" since here one discipline "creeps into" the other, such as – philosophically – in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and – artistically – in the poetry of Mallarmé.[8] Resolute art would accordingly be the result of either an external or an internal interference between art and science.

But a fourth model for the relationship between art and science also exists, and it is one which is also interesting for the aforementioned project. This is a kind of *identity model*, occurring in the first instance in two different variants. Firstly, there is the *dedifferentiation* variant, most adeptly represented by Jacques Derrida. Accordingly, art and science as a pair of opposites suffer the same fate as all pairs of opposites when faced with deconstruction. The first discovery is an implicit hierarchy which is not simply reversed, for that would only mean swapping the signs; instead, it is dissolved through proof that what seems to be only *one* opposite is actually a collection of many different opposites. To put it another way, what appears to be an *opposite* is not actually an opposite, but rather a context of infinite referral. The result is paradoxical: taking pains to notice the differences ultimately leads to dedifferentiation. In other words, the more precisely one looks, the more the sharp contours between A and B, black and white, art and science, begin to blur. The second variant of the identity model does not dedifferentiate, but in contrast redifferentiates. John Dewey provides us with the best example of this variant.[9] Accordingly, art and science are culturally crystallized ways of reacting to indeterminate, not yet understood or explained experiential situations. What they both have in common is experience, first, as an indeterminate object (in German *Gegenstand*), referring to something that is not conceptually determined yet and confronting us, and secondly experience as an anthropological dimension. That is to say, all experience, as organic biology teaches us, involves the overcoming of environmental tensions and oppositions in a temporary balance or equilibrium. Art and science thus also have in common the epistemological basic elements of experience: affection, perception, imagination, cognition and all-connecting emotion. What distinguishes them is how they shape these elements. Whereas science is ultimately dominated by the formula, the law, in other words the element of cognition, art finds satisfaction in a balance between the elements, which basically leads us, during an aesthetic experience, to being interested in the (whole) process of experiencing. Whereas scientific experience is therefore geared to reduction (e.g. to a formula), aesthetic experience has a dynamic and holistic foundation. This is how Dewey comprehends unity and difference in science and art.

## The Variant: "Artistic Research"

These are, then, the models of art and knowledge available to us from the philosophical tradition. If we ask whether artistic research fits into any of these models at all and, if so, which model or models, it does not seem all that difficult to find an answer. With the exception of the antagonistic model, they all offer approaches for this new program, albeit – as I have already bemoaned – very confusing approaches. And yet the new program does not fit neatly into the schema I have described. The tenor of the claim staked by artistic research *qua* researching art is more demanding, more challenging. In fact, its intention is no less than a specific synthesis

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8) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (London and New York: Verso, 1994), 216.

9) See John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, 1980 [1934]).

of art and research: specific because the conceptual logic of a general synthesis would eliminate both components, art and science.[10] The claim cannot be that art simply and generally *is* research, or the other way round, that all research is art. The ambition to identify both can only be a specific one. In the following I will try to explicate what this specific character could look like. At the moment I just want to state that artistic research appears as a third variant of the identity model: the synthetic variant, and by "synthetic" I mean "forming a unity in an artificial way".

## A Sociological Relativization

How, then, to defend the epistemic claim of this variant of the identity model? First of all, through a *sociological relativization*, that much is certain. Within the debate there is a broad consensus that artistic research does not embrace art in its totality. Not all art is thus research.[11] It is simply that, within art, a (still small) domain has emerged which expressly comprehends itself as an area of research as well, ambitiously crossing the line bordering the "sphere of value" (Max Weber) or the "system" (Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann) of science. Accordingly, artistic research is no more and no less than an internal differentiation within the differentiated whole of society. This sociological perspective can help to calm ruffled feathers.

## Epistemological Justification

But once again, we ask: what could an epistemological justification look like? What could the *specific* synthesis of art and research look like? There are certainly several possible answers to this question. But what we do not have to date is a convincing answer.

It thus seems obvious to investigate the concept of *research* with regard to its defining characteristics, which are: accuracy, wide field of application, freedom from contradictions, simplicity and reproductiveness.[12] The next step would be to examine it within different research disciplines: from the natural and technological sciences, to the so-called life sciences, to the social sciences, the humanities and cultural sciences. The plausible hypothesis could be, first, that the named characteristics apply to these disciplines in different degrees and, second, that the concept of artistic research in this framework could also attain a certain, presumably limited significance.

In addition, one could fall back on Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of family resemblance and follow the hypothesis that the concept of research in the natural and technological sciences (A) shares certain features with that in the life sciences (B), that the latter in turn share certain features with the social sciences (C), and they in turn with the humanities (D) and cultural sciences (E). At the end of this row would then stand the concept of artistic research (F), which would presumably share certain characteristics with the humanities and cultural sciences, but with the other sciences maybe only one characteristic or none at all. The different areas of research are then presumed to be internally interconnected – A with B, B with C and so forth – but without an

10) Henk Borgdorff also concedes this in his article: "If everything is research, then nothing is research anymore." Henk Borgdorff, "The Debate on Research in the Arts," *Dutch Journal of Music Theory* 12, no. 1 (2007): 6, 20n.

11) Cf. Judith Siegmund and Anna Calabrese, "Einleitung," in *Wie verändert sich Kunst, wenn man sie als Forschung versteht?*, ed. Judith Siegmund (Bielefeld: Verlag, 2016), 8, 12, https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839432167.

12) Cf. Thomas S. Kuhn, "Objektivität, Werturteil und Theoriewahl," in *Die Entstehung des Neuen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), 421–445. Original: Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226217239.001.0001; Martin Carrier, "Wissenschaft im Wandel: Ziele, Maßstäbe, Nützlichkeit," *Information Philosophie*, no. 3 (2009): [especially] 22.

all-encompassing connection to link the first and last members of the series, to link A and F. Artistic research could then be defended as research, even if it had nothing in common with the research concept of the natural sciences.[13] But that would, of course, have to be demonstrated in detail.

One of the named defining characteristics of research is accuracy, exactness in its definitions, precision in its analyses, descriptions and measuring techniques. This is also a feature which is always linked to the propositional structure of its language. Scientific observations, experimental set-ups and measuring results have to be conveyable, and in a manner which enables persons with the corresponding expertise at their disposal to repeat the described observation. What we call *knowledge* is therefore composed propositionally and is expressed in the form of statements. In contrast, Gilbert Ryle introduced the distinction between propositional and non-propositional knowledge, between *know-that* and *know-how*.[14] Our ancient predecessors knew that it was possible to move a rock with a massive pole, without ever having heard of a law of physics pertaining to levers. Similar distinctions are those between theoretical and practical knowledge or, to cite Michael Polanyi, between implicit or tacit and explicit knowledge.[15]

This distinction can also be fruitful for the knowledge character of art. In the German-speaking world, for example, Gottfried Gabriel has long supported the assumption that art is a form of non-propositional knowledge. When asked how this knowledge can be positively determined, he suggests grasping it as an "envisioning presentation" of the "*conditio humana*" or as an "intuitive-aesthetic world-disclosure."[16] These are obviously pertinent assignations from the philosophical-aesthetic tradition. "Representation" or "presentation", in German *Darstellung*, has been a philosophical term since Kant and means the sensualization, either schematic or symbolic (and thus aesthetic), of a category or an idea.[17] It is currently re-entering the discussion of the English-speaking world as an "aesthetic of presence."[18] It is likewise traditional to link this aesthetic with the *conditio humana*.[19] There then still remains the concept of world disclosure. Starting with Heidegger and

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13) A general definition such as that, "research (is) not a random occurrence, but a purposeful activity geared to the gaining of knowledge and, to this extent, to an increase in overall human knowledge," could then not, following the later Wittgenstein, be formulated. Cf. Reinold Schmücker, "Künstlerisch forschen. Über Herkunft und Zukunft eines ästhetischen Programms," in *Wie verändert sich Kunst, wenn man sie als Forschung versteht?*, 125.

14) Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1949), [especially] chapter 2.

15) Cf. Eva-Maria Jung, "Die Kunst des Wissens und das Wissen der Kunst. Zum epistemischen Status der künstlerischen Forschung," in, *Wie verändert sich Kunst, wenn man sie als Forschung versteht*, 31ff. In the humanities and social sciences there are many terms, in addition to the suggestions from Ryle and Polanyi, which attempt to denote specifically practical competence: "body techniques" (Marcel Mauss), "skills and routines" (Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann), "habitus" (Pierre Bourdieu), "discipline" (Michel Foucault). Dancing, sports and music are here the preferred levels of example (cf. Thomas Alkemeyer, "Bewegen und Mitbewegen. Praktisches Wissen und Zeigen im Sport," in *Politik des Zeigens*, ed. Karen van den Berg and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht [Munich: Fink, 2010], 91–108, https://doi.org/10.30965/9783846750568_007). Kant also discusses the strange status of this rule in the case of art, within the context of the concept of imitation (*Nachahmung*) or following (*Nachfolge*), or in other words, the context of the concept of learning ("learning is imitation"), in which one orientates oneself to "patterns" as "exemplary" role models. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), §32, §46, §47, §49.

16) Gottfried Gabriel, *Zwischen Logik und Literatur. Erkenntnisformen von Dichtung, Philosophie und Wissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991), 215f., https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-03391-8. On aesthetic cognitivism in the English-speaking world, see Berys Gaut, *Art, Emotion and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199263219.001.0001.

17) Cf. Kant, *Critique of* Judgment, l.c., §59.

18) Cf. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

19) Cf. Schmücker, "Künstlerisch forschen," 128f.; Hegel refers to this anthropological assumption as a widespread "common opinion" and quotes the Roman comedic writer Terence: "Nihil humani a me alienum puto" (I count nothing human indifferent to me). G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. I, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 46, https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198244981.book.1.

in the many decades since, this concept has been discussed in its aesthetic significance.[20] But here it is clearly concerned with the cognitive claim of art or of aesthetic experience in general, not with the specific claim to knowledge of that area of art which pitches itself as research.

Neither does this situation change when aesthetic cognitivism is subjected to differentiation, where the purported assumption is that the gain in knowledge offered by art, especially literature, is a gain at a conceptual, moral, phenomenological-descriptive and emotional-empathetic level. Literature, theatre, opera, film accordingly offer a "knowledge of how it would be."[21] Through these art forms we are able to imagine how it would be, should we find ourselves in the position of a person whose situation is portrayed in a certain novel, film and so forth. This assumption is also not new. Kant refers to it in his *Critique of Judgement* as that maxim of common sense, to be able to put oneself in the position of others.[22] Kant also provides us with the conceptual-analytical keyword required to shed light on the double character of this cognitive aesthetic claim. It is, namely, an "as if". The knowledge which expresses itself in an aesthetic judgment when faced with a beautiful, sublime or artistic object is an as-if knowledge, in a double sense: on the one hand, we learn or have conveyed to us a propositionally formulable knowledge, a concrete idea of how it would be to be inside the skin of another person; on the other hand, this knowledge does not come easily, does not come without the appearance that it could be otherwise. With this double structure, Kant illustrates that in the case of the realm of the aesthetic we are dealing with a cognitive claim located beyond the dichotomy of (literal, strict) truth and falsity. Analogue to a scientific hypothesis or a philosophical idea, to which no object within our experience and yet a potential object corresponds, the cognitive claim of an aesthetic judgment or experience can thus assert itself in its own right.

The idea polemically introduced to the world by Harry Frankfurt a few years ago, namely that every statement beyond the alternative of true and false is "bullshit", is therefore premature.[23] For beyond this alternative there do exist hypotheses, ideas and metaphors, in other words forms of expression which open up a new truth framework in a literal sense. It can therefore be the case that art is (sometimes) bullshit, but it cannot be the case that art is nothing but bullshit. And the same thing can be said of artistic research. At the end of my paper we thus find some good news for all those who have an affinity for this concept. The bad news is that the assignation "non-propositional knowledge" is not specific enough to distinguish artistic research from the impact of art in general. Particularly in this context, emphasis on the specific is key: one cannot repeatedly accuse traditional academic thought of lacking a sense of detail, and then oneself bathe in generalities or even intellectual clichés.

## Failing Better

Fontane's *Irrungen, Wirrungen* leaves its bourgeois readers with the message that there are two types of failure, a conservative failing and a revolutionary failing, and that one is better than the other. However, this alternative

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20) Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. F.G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 199ff.; Martin Seel, "Kunst, Wahrheit, Welterschließung," in *Perspektiven der Kunstphilosophie. Texte und Diskussionen*, ed. Franz Koppe (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1991), 36–80; also, cf. Richard Rorty, "Philosophy as science, as metaphor, and as politics," in *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, philosophical papers vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 12f.: For Rorty, a statement, paradigmatically a metaphorical description, counts as truth-apt to the extent that, in Heideggerian terms, it can be viewed as the opening up of a truth field, as the introduction of new candidates for (literal) truth, which leads to a change in our previous convictions.

21) Ingrid Vendrell Ferran, *Die Vielfalt der Erkenntnis. Eine Analyse des kognitiven Werts der Literatur* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2018), 20 and 215ff., https://doi.org/10.30965/9783957437624.

22) Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, l.c., §40.

23) Cf. Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 33f, 45ff., and 55ff.

is not applicable to the conceptual pair art and researching art. Art does not simply stand for the traditional, while researching art stands for the modern. It is not simply theoretically the case that art, itself increasingly trans-boundary since the classical *avant garde*, does not make people happy, but happier than a newly trans-boundary researching art. It is not necessary to view the relationship between the two as a hyped conflict; they are not a dramatic couple. As I have attempted to show, it is simply a case of, first, an additional modern differentiation within the field of art and, second, an epistemic cooling of hot air. This cooling is necessary, however. For, in the case of researching art, the gulf between claim and reality is abysmal. In this abyss awaits the failing of generality and confusion – a confusion produced by the rampant combinatorics of theory, performance, interactive theatre and self-awareness groups. Learning to fail better means building on differentiations and working hard on the concept. In the face of such failure, we have to call out in astonishment: this is as good as it gets!

## Postscript

At a performance by the Wuppertal Pina Bausch dance theatre, *Neues Stück 1* by Dimitris Papaioannou, a man with a thin, yet wiry figure moves from one chair to the next – they are positioned behind each other in an untidy row – by climbing onto the first chair and then, just as he is balancing in mid-air to move to the next chair, placing the first chair over his shoulder. In this way he moves from chair to chair, with the pile of chairs on his back getting bigger and bigger. He always seems to know exactly how he has to wedge one chair into the next. Simply piling them on top of each other would not work. He is the exact paradigm of a theorist who puts given elements together in a new way. The performance artist really does manage to get to the end, his back bent under its burden. Applause. The audience is amazed. And then he collapses – but the audience is still amazed.

*Translated by Sarah L. Kirkby*

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