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Art and Knowledge in Classical German Philosophy

a cura di Francesco Campana e Gabriele Tomasi

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info@aestheticaedizioni.it

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Art and Knowledge in Classical German Philosophy. An Introduction

di Francesco Campana e Gabriele Tomasi

There is probably no period in the history of modern and contemporary thought in which the relationship between philosophy and art in general – and literature, in particular – has been so central to the debate as in the period between Kant and Hegel. Consider, for instance, Kant's cautious claim that the poet, while aiming at "a mere play with ideas", provides "nourishment to the understanding" and gives life to its concepts through the imagination;[1] Friedrich Schlegel's bold statement that poetry and philosophy should become one;[2] Schelling's placement of art as the "keystone" of his system of transcendental idealism capable of achieving the highest degree of knowledge; and the late Hegel who, while not considering the art of modernity as the center of knowledge, places it alongside philosophy as a distinct form of absolute spirit. There is also Hölderlin's attempt to conceive of a scale of "tones" through which to think about literature and history; Schleiermacher's theory of expressive knowledge that fits in as a way of understanding individuality from a metaphysical as much as anthropological point of view; and the proposals of later Romanticism to think politics through aesthetic concepts. In general, the main positions in the debate on the cognitive value of art were explored, the motif of poetry as both the origin and consummation of science included. For anyone interested in both the theoretical question of the cognitive value of art and in the main themes concerning the aesthetics of this historical-philosophical period, this is *per se* a sufficient reason for devoting a volume to the topic of art and knowledge in classical German philosophy.

[1] I. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by the Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. 5, W. de Gruyter, Berlin 1968, § 51, AA 05: 321; Eng. trans. by P. Guyer and E. Matthews, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. by P. Guyer, Cambridge University Press, New York 2000, p. 199.

[2] Cf. F. Schlegel, *Die Lyceums-Fragmente*, in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, vol. 2.1, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I (1796-1801)*, ed. by H. Eichner, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, München-Padeborn-Wien, Thomas Verlag, Zürich, 1967, Fr. 115, p. 161; Eng. trans. by P. Firchow, *Critical Fragments*, *in Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1971, p. 157.

The topic of "art and knowledge" can be unpacked along the lines of the following three central questions.

First is the question of the role and cognitive achievements of imagination: how can the creative role of art and imagination be compatible with the claim that art reveals truth? According to Kant, works of art give the imagination "an impetus to think",[3] they occasion processes of thought, but these do not result in determinate knowledge. On the other hand, for example, in his *Fichte-Studien* Novalis, somehow echoing Fichte, claims that the productive imagination "is the source, the mother of all reality, [is] reality itself".[4] What, then, is the role of imagination in making sense of the world? Does the artistic use of imagination emphasize a function that it (already) sustains in constructing and conferring meaning to ordinary experience?

Second is the question of whether a feeling could constitute an experience in which the world reveals itself to us. This question intertwines with that of the meaning of beauty. Regarding it, Kant's stance is intriguing: while he denies cognitive content to feeling and therefore to the experience of beauty, he hints at the "cipher by means of which nature figuratively speaks to us in its beautiful forms".[5] Theoretically charged is also Hölderlin's conception, according to which what is present as beauty is that being in virtue of which we are, think and act. Can beauty or the feeling that constitutes or reveals it offer any kind of access to this being? As for (primordial) feeling as a candidate for subjective access to the absolute, Novalis' view is highly interesting. Though he glosses feeling as "not-knowledge", it is doubtful that he attributes it a theoretical role as an immediate non-cognitive access to the absolute. According to Novalis, as a passive state, feeling is brought into being by the absolute. However, more than a mode of access, he considers it an orientation toward the absolute, which at the same time expresses a limitation: the denial that a finite being has access to the infinite. Significantly, the limits or borders of feeling are, for Novalis, the limits or borders of philosophy itself. If feeling has a power of revelation, it is a negative one, as a feeling of lack. But how does this surface to consciousness, if not through some kind of conceptualization?

Third is the issue of the possible extension of the idea of "truth"

[3] Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, cit., AA 05: 315; Eng. trans., p. 193.

[4] Novalis, *Philosophische Studien der Jahre 1795-96 (Fichte-Studien)*, in Novalis, *Schriften*, vol. 2, *Das philosophische Werk I*, ed. by R. Samuel with H.-J. Mähl and G. Schulz, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1981, p. 266; Eng. trans. by J. Kneller, *Fichte Studies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003, p. 165.

[5] Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, cit., § 42; AA 05: 301; Eng. trans., p. 180.

beyond propositional knowledge. Alternatively, if one wants to give up the vocabulary of truth, the question becomes whether the sphere of cognition should be defined solely by truth or whether rational discourse is confined to the propositionally "sayable".

On these questions, we find an array of conceptions in classical German philosophy that extend from a reception of epistemological concepts in the artistic domain to a fracture between art and knowledge, passing through a view of complementarity between poetry and science, which emphasizes poetry's priority over propositional knowledge and its role as the cognitive fulfillment of such knowledge.[6]

This makes the conceptions of these philosophers and/or poets not only historically interesting, but also relevant to the contemporary debate on aesthetic cognitivism. Only contemporary philosophy of art has responded with such a variety of insights to the question of the relationship between art and knowledge,[7] and it is essential to show how most of the proposals in vogue today have their origins, or at least already considerable articulation, in these decades.

We hope this will emerge from the essays collected in this volume, which offer a series of perspectives on aspects of these complex issues.

What emerges in this series of contributions is a composite picture of the period, both in terms of the views concerning the specific topic of the relationship between art and knowledge, and in terms of the general philosophical perspectives taken by classical German philosophy. As we see in these essays, reasoning on the relationship between art and knowledge has implications that extend beyond the aesthetic realm, involving areas such as epistemology, the philosophy of history, the philosophy of nature, and political philosophy.

The first two essays of the volume look at Kant, who initiates this historical-philosophical period. *Kant and the cognitive value of poetry* by Gabriele Tomasi shows that we can attribute to Kant a moderate aesthetic cognitivism on the basis of the *experience* triggered by artworks, even though he seems to draw a clear dis-

[6] We owe this formulation to B. Bowman, 'On the Defense of Literary Value: From Early German Romanticism to Analytic Philosophy of Literature', in D. Nassar (ed.), *The Relevance of Romanticism. Essays on German Romantic Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, New York 2014, pp. 151-155.

[7] For some particularly representative recent studies, see, among others, J. Gibson, W. Huemer and L. Pocci (eds.), *A Sense of the World. Essays on fiction, narrative, and knowledge*, Routledge, New York 2007; J. Mikkonen, *The cognitive value of philosophical fiction*, Bloomsbury, London *et al.* 2014; G. Currie, *Imagining and Knowing. The Shape of Fiction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020.

tinction between aesthetic value and other kinds of value, such as cognitive and moral value. There is no doubt that, according to Kant, artists aim to create beautiful representations of things and that the audience seeks a distinctive kind of pleasure from artworks. However, artists achieve this aim only if their works embody those representations of the imagination that he calls aesthetic ideas. Assuming that the audience's expectations when approaching an artwork are not cognitive, it therefore seems that the appreciation of form cannot be isolated from significance, that is, expression. The author points out that this suggests that works of art may also have cognitive value and that this value contributes to their overall artistic value. More precisely, his claim is that in (good) artworks, both aesthetic and cognitive value interact, since both depend on aesthetic ideas, that is, representations of the imagination that, according to Kant, are embodied and expressed by them.

Andy Hamilton, in his contribution *Kant's Concept of Genius: A Defense, Against Romanticism and Scepticism*, traces different approaches to the concept of genius. The author situates Kant's view as a halfway position between the Romantic view on genius and the skeptical approach to it. The Romantic position identifies genius as something innate and divine while the skeptical position (e.g., Nietzsche and his postmodern successors) devalues genius as inauthentic, reducing it to the result of hard work. Kant, by contrast, combines innate and acquired dimensions of genius. Kant's conception of genius helps resolve one of the biggest issues in his aesthetics, namely, the tense relationship between aesthetic judgment as an appreciation of purpose without a purpose and the recognition that the artwork is created with a purpose. Kant sees in the personality of genius a talent that is original in the moment that she gives the rule to what she does; at the same time, genius is exemplary, that is, goes on to be imitated by the school it produces and eventually inspires subsequent artists to create their own exemplary artworks. Genius is an innate talent that is mediated and disciplined by taste, unlike what the *Sturm und Drang* movement thought. Hamilton discusses the Kantian standpoint, dwelling on the question of genius in science and arguing that the concept does not itself have ethnocentric, patriarchal, elitist, or mystifying implications. He identifies in Kant's proposal the conception most capable of bringing together talent, ability and exemplarity in a holistic explanation that is still valid today.

Continuing the series of thinkers of the period, Elisa Ronzheimer, in her *Hölderlin as Reader of Poetry: Notes on the "Wechsel der Töne"*, proposes an accurate analysis of Hölderlin's enigmatic text. Rather than follow the standard interpretation of the poem as an example of how Hölderlin conceives poetic production, the author proposes to see in the text an expression of his own practice of reading literature. More than a closed and positive system, and characterized by attention to moments of transition, Hölderlin's sketches represent a way of thinking about a literature – modern but also ancient – constituted by the hybridization of genres. The author dwells on the genesis and various versions of the text, analyzes the polysemy that characterized the term "tone" in the context of the time, and emphasizes Hölderlin's experience as a translator in its constitution. Conceiving the *Variation of Tones* as a reading practice that perceives the literary text as a processual unfolding in time, Ronzheimer discusses the positions of critical literature (first of all that of Peter Szondi), shows how Hölderlin's text contains both an essentialist and relational conception of literature and literary genres, and describes it as a proto-structuralist example that presents, at the same time, a real philosophy of history.

Johannes Korngiebel's *Zwischen Systemanspruch und Systemkritik. Friedrich Schlegels 'Offenes System im Werden'* explores the issue of the system in Schlegel's thought. In the critical literature, the prevailing view has been that Schlegel was not a systematic thinker and that he fundamentally rejected the system as a possible form of philosophy. Only recently has it emerged that this view does not fully correspond to Schlegel's self-understanding. For him, the rigid aspects of the system are to be questioned, but this does not invalidate the systematic claim of his thought in general. This contribution deepens both Schlegel's critique of rigid philosophical systems and his own claim to a system, showing how he comes, unlike Fichte and Spinoza, to develop the idea of a connection between system and the absence of system. Moreover, the contribution illustrates how Schlegel, in his *Lectures on Transcendental Philosophy* of 1800-01, for the first time develops the concept of a system in progress, open to development, incomplete, and consequently relative. Such a system can encompass a plurality of historical systems, which can only be adequately represented by the relationship between philosophy and poetry. This type of system connects the attempt to achieve a systematic configuration and a critique of a fixed concept of system.

Paul Hamilton addresses the relationship between aesthetics and political philosophy in his *The Romantic development of classical German philosophy: from post-Kantianism to Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Rancière*. He analyzes the possibility of conceiving a new politics through Agamben's and Rancière's discussion of post-Kantian aesthetics, with particular reference to Romanticism. Unlike Lyotard, who developed the Kantian idea of the "sublime", and through a critique of Schmitt's interpretation of Romanticism, they focus on the idea of aesthetic difference. The author analyzes the views of Agamben and Rancière as part of the tradition that stems from Kantian aesthetics to its political development in Romanticism and that finds in Benjamin and Adorno two of its greatest interpreters. Following this tradition, they translate aesthetic conceptions into political ways of thinking. The concepts of "dissensus" and "bare life" are presented as central categories that, coming in the first instance from the aesthetic sphere, facilitate a sort of suspension of law and model a new kind of political community.

Anthropoaesthetics of Expression. Art and Knowledge in Friedrich Schleiermacher by Gregorio Tenti deals with the relationship between art and knowledge in Schleiermacher's philosophy of individuality. The concept of expression is central in all his work and is elaborated in an original way, starting from Spinoza and differing from his contemporaries. On the basis of this concept, a type of expressive knowledge is developed that is proper to art and religion. The author considers this to be a knowledge whose content evokes an irreducibly singular way of communicating that is capable, at the same time, of universality. Addressing Schleiermacher's thought both from an ontological-metaphysical perspective and an aesthetic-anthropological perspective, the author shows how Schleiermacher's epistemology of individuality, his aesthetics of expression and his anthropology are intertwined. In this context, the concept of *Trieb* (impulse) is fundamental as a bridge between different dimensions, because it abolishes a clear distinction between reason and sensitivity and encourages a virtuous relationship between ideality and reality.

The topic of tragedy is at the heart of Giovanna Pinna's *Who's afraid of Seneca? Conflict and pathos in the romantic-idealistic theory of tragedy*. The author analyzes the choice, both theoretical and canonical, made by the thinkers of German aesthetics around 1800, to exclude a tragic representation of Senecan matrix and to privilege what, for them, is the "Attic" concept of tragedy. If the former, followed by a tradition culminating in French Classicism and in

authors such as Corneille and Racine, consists of a theater that sees the essence of tragedy in the mere exposure of suffering and conflict among the passions of individuals, the latter sees in tragedy the expression of an ethical or metaphysical conflict. For authors such as the Schlegel brothers, Schelling, Solger or Hegel, tragedy focuses on the dialectical struggle between opposing principles and not on the suffering caused by misfortune or the destructive emotional states of the characters. In antiquity, the tragic clash consists between pathos forms, i.e., individualities who recognize themselves in ethical-metaphysical principles, while in modernity the clash is internal to the characters. In addition to the exclusion of Seneca and the tradition that follows from him, this has also led to the devaluation of Euripides compared to Aeschylus and Sophocles. This conception of tragedy shows how between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a completely new aesthetics of tragedy developed, which philosophically rethought the theory and canon of the literary genre in question.

Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer in his *The absolute perspective of the personal subject. Hegel vs. Plato on social philosophy, art, and religion* addresses the question of the constitution of an individual as a member of humankind and shows how the Hegelian position is relevant to articulating its structure, even from a contemporary point of view. The opposition of "methodical individualism" in the social sciences to Hegelian "holism", which sees in his thought a form of illiberal collectivism, does not consider how he elaborates the absolute status of the individual subject. The author makes it clear how Hegel's position on religion and art as early versions of our insights into the overall condition of human wisdom must be brought into focus again. The author discusses Hegel's reading of Plato's pedagogical politics. He argues that while, on the one hand, Hegel defends the Greek thinker's view on the relationship between personality and community, he points out – more clearly than Popper does – how, on the other hand, in the Greek world there was no real understanding of personal subjectivity as the foundation of human freedom and dignity. It is not a question of the superior existence of conceptual forms over empirical appearances, but of the fundamental facts of subjectivity, perspective, and temporal actuality in our relations with the world. Hegel identified not in the Greek world, but in Christian religion and medieval art, how the highest dignity of the human being and the absoluteness of subjectivity are produced by orientations to wisdom and subjected to perspective changes of objective reality.

Luca Illetterati's contribution, *Art is (not) knowledge. A question of Hegelian terminology*, offers some precious terminological and theoretical clarifications. He moves from a discussion of Albert Hofstadter's seminal paper on the cognitive value of art within Hegel's philosophy. While Hofstadter aimed at explaining in what sense we should understand the Hegelian idea that art is a deeper form of knowledge than the sciences, Illetterati shows that the question becomes clearer if we take into account the specific terminology that Hegel uses, and in particular the fundamental distinction between the German terms "*kennen*" and "*wissen*". In the English language, these terms tend to be conflated in the concept of "*knowledge*" in general, which blurs their conceptual distinction. Illetterati shows that if one thinks of knowledge as *Kenntnis* or the knowledge of objects, art is not knowledge; but if one thinks instead of knowledge as *Wissen*, or the fundamental experiences through which spirit knows itself by recognizing itself in the other, then one must say that art is knowledge.

In the contribution *From Poetry to Music. The Paradigms of Art in German Aesthetics of the 19th Century* Francesco Campana deals with the transition from an aesthetics where poetry is at the apex of the system of the particular arts, as in the thoughts of Hegel, Solger, Schelling, to a vision where music is the central art, as in the views of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Wagner. After considering the issue of the system of the particular arts as a philosophical problem and analyzing the theoretical positions in question, the author identifies the rationality proper to the two paradigms that emerge, the literary one and the musical one, investigating the aesthetic, philosophical, and socio-historical reasons behind this shift. The basic hypothesis is that the shift from an aesthetics with 'literary traction' to one with 'musical traction' is a first moment, a premise, of that conflagration of artistic genres that took place in the twentieth century mainly by Avant-garde and Neo-avant-garde movements and that is part of the epochal fracture in art history that has been interpreted as the 'end of art' in the contemporary world.

With this series of essays, we hope to offer a composite picture of the relationship between art and knowledge that can serve as a useful contribution not only to debates within classical German philosophy but to contemporary problems as well.[8]

[8] The authors of this text thank Anna Katsman for language editing.

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Kant and the cognitive value of poetry

di Gabriele Tomasi*

ABSTRACT

In light of Kant's conception of taste, it is rather natural to assume that our aesthetic appreciation of artworks should focus on their formal features. As a matter of fact, Kant acknowledges that part of the significance that beauty and art have for us depends on their relationship to central interests of reason. Nevertheless, he seems to draw a clear distinction between aesthetic value and other kinds of value, such as cognitive and moral value. Therefore, it might seem that art cannot have (and should not be experienced as having) any further end beyond the pleasure of reflection. For this reason, Kant would be an autonomist. However, in this paper I argue that careful consideration of how Kant describes the *experience* triggered by artworks reveals that he is actually an aesthetic cognitivist, though a moderate one. I suggest that the distinctive kind of pleasure that artists aim at producing, and the audience seeks to enjoy, can be achieved only if artworks embody representations of the imagination that occasion processes of thought. Even if artists' intentions and the audience's expectations in approaching an artwork are not cognitive, it seems that the appreciation of form cannot be isolated from significance, and that cognitive value contributes to the overall artistic value of a work. In the paper, I defend this claim with regard to poetry, but argue that it can be extended, to different degrees, to other arts.

KEYWORDS

Kant, Baumgarten, Poetry, Aesthetic Ideas, Aesthetic Cognitivism, Imagination

In his *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790),[1] Kant famously states that fine art has "the reflecting power of judgment […] as its standard".[2] He emphasizes the relevance of the formal features of artworks for our appreciation of them as beautiful and insists that the aesthetic evaluation of a work is not cognitive in nature.[3]

* Università degli studi di Padova (IT), gabriele.tomasi@unipd.it

[1] Throughout the paper, Kant's works are quoted using the standard abbreviations, followed by volume and page number of the Akademie Ausgabe (AA), using the translations of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the *Lectures on Logic* and the *Lectures on Anthropology* (where provided) from the Cambridge Edition of Kant's Works (Cambridge University Press).

[2] KU § 44, AA 05: 306.

[3] Cf. KU 1 and § 15.

Although he acknowledges that part of the significance that beauty and art have for us depends on their relation to central interests of reason,[4] he seems to draw a clear distinction between aesthetic value and other kinds of value, such as cognitive and moral value. It is therefore natural to read his claim that "beautiful art must be free" and that the mind, in contemplating it, "must feel itself to be satisfied and stimulated […] without looking beyond to another end"[5] as meaning that art cannot have (and should not be experienced as having) any further end beyond the pleasure of reflection. In other words, it is natural to characterize Kant's stance as autonomist. In this paper, I will argue against this interpretation by suggesting that careful consideration of how he describes the *experience* triggered by artworks reveals that Kant is actually an aesthetic cognitivist. Considering him as such does not contradict his claim that what is essential in all beautiful art consists in form; indeed, it allows us to make sense of one of his further claims, namely that taking pleasure in a beautiful form "is at the same time culture and disposes the spirit to ideas".[6]

If Kant is an aesthetic cognitivist, then he is surely a moderate one.[7] In his view, artists aim to create beautiful representations of things[8] through the specific medium of their art, and the audience seeks a distinctive kind of pleasure from artworks; it attends to them with the expectation that they will afford a pleasure that animates the mind and its cognitive powers.[9] The point is that

[4] Cf. KU §§ 42, 52, 59.

[5] KU § 51, AA 05: 321.

[6] KU § 52, AA 05: 326.

[7] With the expression 'aesthetic cognitivism' I roughly mean a general conception of artistic value that attempts to explain (i) one way in which art can be of value – i.e. by having, in addition to aesthetic merit, cognitive content – and (ii) the importance of this way of being of value. According to aesthetic cognitivism, art, when at its best, is also a form of understanding. It has (or conveys) cognitive content or prompts cognitive activity. I do not assume that art can give us propositional knowledge, if by this we mean the kind of knowledge at issue in science, since it is hard to believe that art can support its claims with empirical evidence that validates them. Nevertheless, art can improve and refine other kinds of knowledge, such as conceptual, phenomenal, and practical knowledge. Furthermore, it is prudent to avoid generalizations and to limit the claim by saying that some people can learn from some works of art. I have used the expression 'art at its best', as only works of a certain quality – in Kant's terms, "works of genius" – are likely to be epistemically valuable, and our experience of them can foster cognitive abilities and virtues. Aesthetic cognitivism involves a further element, namely the idea that the cognitive value of a work contributes to its value *qua* art. Therefore, aesthetic cognitivism puts forward two claims: (i) the epistemic claim that something can be learned from (some) works of art, or that they can improve or refine our conceptual, perceptual, imaginative, etc., abilities, and (ii) the aesthetic claim that the possible cognitive value of a work of art contributes to its artistic value.

[8] Cf. KU § 48.

[9] Cf. KU § 12.

artists can achieve this aim only if their works embody "ideas, which are fantastic and yet at the same time rich in thought".[10] Assuming that the audience's expectations when approaching an artwork are not cognitive, it therefore seems that the appreciation of form cannot be isolated from significance, from expression. This suggests that artworks may also have cognitive value and that this value contributes to their overall artistic value – or at least this is what I will argue here. More precisely, my claim is that in (good) artworks, both aesthetic and cognitive value are present and interact, since both depend on aesthetic ideas, that is, representations of the imagination that, according to Kant, are embodied and expressed by good artworks.

In this paper, I will defend this claim with regard to poetry, the art to which Kant attributes "the highest rank of all",[11] but I assume that it can be extended, to different degrees, to other arts. The paper proceeds as follows. I begin by sketching the conceptions of poetry and aesthetic ideas presented in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (section 1). I then elaborate on a notion connected to that of aesthetic ideas, namely the notion of spirit, and briefly trace the background of Kant's conception of aesthetic ideas, which can be found in Baumgarten's aesthetics (section 2). In section 3, I deal, if very briefly, with Baumgarten's conception of the cognitive role of poetry and with Kant's comments on it (or on Meier's version of it) in his lectures on anthropology and logic (section 3). When we fully appreciate the careful reading that these latter texts require, their value as sources of observations on poetry becomes clear.[12] Finally, I return to the third *Critique* and the cognitive benefits of poetry (section 4).

[10] KU § 47, AA 05: 309.

[11] KU § 53, AA 05: 326.

[12] Kant gave lectures on logic and anthropology, commenting, respectively, on Baumgarten's *Psychologia empirica*, that is, §§ 504-739 of his *Metaphysica* (1739), and on Georg Friedrich Meier's *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre* (1752) (Meier was Baumgarten's pupil and successor in Halle). As Allen W. Wood and Robert B. Louden (the editors of the *Lectures on Anthropology*) note, it is worth considering the transcripts of these lectures, problematic though this material may be, insofar as the anthropology was "the principal site of the development" of Kant's view on aesthetics (I. Kant, *Lectures on logic*, Eng. trans. and ed. by J.M. Young, Cambridge University Press, New York 1992, p. 10). Moreover, aesthetic issues were also discussed in courses on logic, given the conception of aesthetics developed by Baumgarten, who also called it a "gnoseologia inferior" or "ars analogi rationis", as a "scientia cognitionis sensitivae" (A.G. Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, Olms, Hildesheim 1961 (anastatic reprint of the edition Frankfurt 1750), § 1, p.1).

1. *Poetry in the Kantian System of Arts*

Kant's examination of poetry is developed in the context of a division of the beautiful arts into different kinds – a set of distinctions that he describes "as an experiment", asking his reader to judge his proposal not "as if it were a deliberate theory" but as "only one of the several experiments that still can and should be attempted".[13] In this "experiment", he begins with a definition of beauty as "the expression of aesthetic ideas".[14] This justifies his division of the arts according to an analogy between art and "the kind of expression that people use in speaking in order to communicate to each other, i.e., not merely their concepts, but also their sensations". As this expression consists "in the word, the gesture, and the tone (articulation, gesticulation, and modulation)", the suggestion is that types of beautiful art can be connected to each of these aspects. Thus we have "the art of speech, pictorial art, and the art of the play of sensations (as external sensory impressions)", namely music and the art of colors.[15] In this tentative division, poetry, together with rhetoric, belong to the "arts of speech": Rhetoric, Kant claims, "is the art of conducting a business (*Geschäft*) of the understanding as a free play of the imagination; poetry that of carrying out a free play of the imagination as a business of the understanding". Shifting from the art to the artist, he then adds: "the orator […] announces a matter of business and carries it out as if it were merely a play with ideas in order to entertain the audience. The poet announces merely an entertaining play with ideas, and yet as much results for the understanding as if he had merely had the intention of carrying on its business".[16]

Interestingly, even though Kant acknowledges the formal differences between poetry and rhetoric (in particular, poetry's use of verse),[17] he does not distinguish between them on this basis, instead

[13] KU § 51, AA 05: 321.

[14] KU § 51, AA 05: 320.

[15] On Kant's division of the arts, see S. Mathisen, 'Kants System der schönen Künste (§§ 51-54)', in O. Höffe (ed.), *Immanuel Kant. Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 2008, pp. 173-188.

[16] KU § 51, AA 05: 320-321.

[17] On this see A.C. Ribeiro, *Intending to Repeat: A Definition of Poetry*, in "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", 65, 2, 2007, pp. 189-201. Kant clearly does not overlook the role of prosody. Precisely to the contrary, he claims that each poem requires two things, namely "syllabic meter (*Sylbenmaas*)" – that is, the dynamic relation between sounds, through which poetry imitates music – and "rhyme (*Reim*)". He was perfectly aware that the quantity of syllables is less determined in modern languages, and this contributed to the importance given to rhyme: "Rhyme is a melody, but only in the West", where it is now "indispensable[,] for we have no orderly prosody, but instead can arbitrarily use various words. Hence rhyme serves to give our verses more interconnection.

focusing on the distinct aims pursued by each art. The orator "announces a matter of business"; his aim, one can conjecture, is to instruct, to produce some sort of belief, but in order to entertain the audience, he carries it out "as if it were merely a play with ideas".[18] By contrast, the poet aims at "a mere play with ideas, but accomplishes something that is worthy of business, namely providing nourishment to the understanding in play, and giving life to its concepts through the imagination".[19]

Thus a cognitive effect seems to be built into Kant's very definition of poetry: although the poet's aim is not a cognitive one, his work provides "food" for the understanding while it entertains it. This becomes even clearer if we consider why Kant, when comparing the aesthetic value of the various beautiful arts, attributes "the highest rank of all" to poetry. On his view, poetry

> expands the mind by setting the imagination free and presenting, within the limits of a given concept and among the unbounded manifold of forms possibly agreeing with it, the one that connects its presentation with a fullness of thought to which no linguistic expression is fully adequate, and thus elevates itself aesthetically to the level of ideas. It strengthens the mind by letting it feel its capacity to consider and judge of nature, as appearance, freely, self-actively, and independently of determination by nature, in accordance with points of view that nature does not present by itself in experience either for sense or for the understanding, and thus to use it for the sake of and as it were as the schema of the supersensible. It plays with the illusion which it produces at will, yet without thereby being deceitful; for it itself declares its occupation to be mere play, which can nevertheless be purposively employed by the understanding for its own business.[20]

Rhyme also helps the memory". However, Kant acknowledged that it is also possible to compose (*dichten*) without rhyme and "syllabic measure". This is the case with "poetic prose" (V-Anth/Mron, AA 25: 1282; cf. also V-Anth/Mensch, AA 25: 992; Anth § 71, AA 07, 248).

[18] According to Kant, thanks to his "skill in speaking (eloquence and style)" and "a lively presentation in examples" (KU § 53, AA 05: 327), the orator both provides something that he has not promised, namely "an entertaining play of the imagination", and takes something away from what he has promised, namely "the purposive occupation of the understanding" (KU § 51, AA 05: 321). Rhetoric is a fine art through a kind of failure, that is, in providing less than it promises. If on the one hand rhetoric can degenerate into the art of "deceiving by means of beautiful illusion" (KU § 53, AA 05: 327), on the other hand it can find a kind of artistic redemption when it is combined "with a painterly presentation of its subjects as well as objects in a *play*". For Kant, this is one of those combinations thanks to which "beautiful art is all the more artistic" (KU § 52, AA 05: 326). In a play, the action is often portrayed through the expression of the characters' thoughts and feelings in eloquent discourses that follow "the rules of euphony in speech" and show "propriety in expression" (KU § 53, AA 05: 327).

[19] KU § 51, AA 05: 321.

[20] KU § 53, AA 05: 326-327. A further reason for the high ranking of poetry could be the following. Introducing the principle of his division of the arts, Kant observes that "only the combination" of words, gesture and tone "constitutes the speaker's complete communication. For thought, intuition, and sensation are thereby conveyed to the other simultaneously and united" (KU § 51, AA 05: 320). As we will see, poetic language also has figurative and musical features. Therefore, poetry can come close to complete com-

He puts forward three reasons for poetry's high standing, and the reader of the third *Critique* will immediately notice that the phrasing of the first two follows the description of aesthetic ideas offered just before, in § 49, where Kant claims that "the faculty of aesthetic ideas can reveal itself in its full measure" in the art of poetry.[21] Kant clearly views the value of poetry as being rooted in its particular connection to aesthetic ideas. The third reason mentioned by Kant indirectly explains the distinction between poetry and rhetoric, understood as the deceptive "art of persuasion",[22] since it suggests that poetry produces representations that, while perhaps untrue, are not falsehoods. I will return to this point in section 3. For now, I wish to turn to a notion that is clearly crucial to Kant's conception of poetry, namely that of aesthetic ideas.

1.1 *Poetry and Aesthetic Ideas*

To introduce the notion of aesthetic ideas, I wish to recall a further clue that Kant provides regarding the connection between poetry and these ideas, namely his statement that poetry "owes its origin almost entirely to genius".[23] This claim is interesting because, according to Kant, one can explain this creative talent "in terms of the faculty of aesthetic ideas".[24] Genius, he states,

> really consists in the happy relation, which no science can teach and no diligence learn, of finding ideas for a given concept on the one hand and on the other hitting upon the expression for these, through which the subjective disposition of the mind that is thereby produced, as an accompaniment of a concept, can be communicated to others.[25]

Kant observes that genius is a natural gift – a talent that, although it must be trained, depends not on learning but on the subject's disposition[26] and involves two interrelated abilities: a creative talent of the imagination for finding ideas, and an expressive

munication on the part of the (poetic) speaker. In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), Kant points out that poetry wins the prize "over rhetoric" because it is "at the same time music (singable) and tone; a sound that is pleasant in itself, which mere speech is not". But, he adds, "poetry wins the prize […] over every other beautiful art" because "poets also speak to the understanding […]. A good poem is the most penetrating means of enlivening the mind" (Anth § 71, AA 07: 247).

[21] KU § 49, AA 05: 314.
[22] KU § 53, AA 05: 327.
[23] KU § 53, AA 05: 326.
[24] KU § 57 Anm. I, AA 05: 344.
[25] KU § 49, AA 05: 317.
[26] Cf. KU §§ 46-47.

ability. This latter talent, Kant explains, "is really that which is called spirit".[27] I will address this notion below. For now, let us focus on the first aspect of genius.

To understand the first part of the passage just quoted, we should recall that beautiful art is a kind of intentional activity.[28] Not unlike the artisan, the (fine) artist pursues an end, e.g. dealing with a certain theme, by constructing a verbal artifact (e.g. by writing a poem) with certain formal features, or by painting a landscape, etc. If what is called 'a given concept' in the passage is just the artist's end, then finding ideas for the presentation of that concept lies at the core of artistic creation. The 'ideas' in question are aesthetic ideas, which Kant describes as follows:

> In a word, the aesthetic idea is a representation of the imagination, associated with a given concept, which is combined with such a manifold of partial representations (*Teilvorstellungen*) in the free use of the imagination that no expression designating a determinate concept can be found for it, which therefore allows the addition to a concept of much that is unnameable, the feeling of which animates the cognitive faculties and combines spirit with the mere letter of language.[29]

The passage is rich and complex, as Kant seems to shift between the point of view of the artist and that of the audience. The former seems to be at issue when he speaks, as in the passage on genius quoted at the beginning of this section, of a disposition of the mind that is produced when one finds ideas for a given concept; the latter is suggested in the lines just quoted. Here, Kant speaks of a feeling that is connected to the flow of representations, resulting from the aesthetic idea associated with a given concept by the imagination, namely (if I am not mistaken), with the concept that the artist wants to present (or to deal with) through the medium of her art. Kant points out that the representation of the imagination belongs to the presentation of the concept; however, it is not a mere intuition corresponding to it, as an exemplification of a concept usually is. In fact, he emphasizes that in presenting the concept, this representation occasions further thinking, without its being possible for any concept, "to be adequate to it": It occasions a process of thinking which, Kant claims, "no language fully attains or can make intelligible",[30] whence the "much that is unnameable" that is added to the (given) concept.

[27] KU § 49, AA 05: 317.

[28] Cf. KU Einl. VIII, AA 05: 193, §§ 43-44 and § 47, AA 05: 310.

[29] KU § 49, AA 05: 316.

[30] KU § 49, AA 05: 314. In § 57, Kant will specify that an aesthetic idea is "an intuition (of the imagination) for which a concept can never be found adequate" (KU § 57, AA 05: 342).

The quote above also suggests that the triggering of much thinking by the aesthetic idea depends on the manifold of partial representations with which it is combined in the free use of the imagination, namely when the imagination is not used for cognition. I take a partial representation to be part of the manifold contained in a representation of (the concept of) something, considered as the whole. As such, it can prompt associations, combinations of thoughts, etc., that do not solidify in a presentation (*exhibition*) of a concept. A similar point is made by Kant, taking from the vocabulary of art treatises the notion of an "attribute":

> Those forms which do not constitute the presentation of a given concept itself, but, as supplementary representations (*Nebenvorstellungen*) of the imagination, express only the implications connected with it and its affinity with others, are called (aesthetic) *attributes* of an object whose concept, as an idea of reason, cannot be adequately presented. Thus Jupiter's eagle, with the lightning in its claws, is an attribute of the powerful king of heaven, as is the peacock of the splendid queen of heaven. They do not, like *logical attributes*, represent what lies in our concepts of the sublimity and majesty of creation, but something else, which gives the imagination cause to spread itself over a multitude of related representations, which let one think more than one can express in a concept determined by words; and they yield an *aesthetic idea*, which serves that idea of reason instead of logical presentation, although really only to animate the mind by opening up for it the prospect of an immeasurable field of related representations.[31]

Kant first offers a definition and then an example to explain it. Jupiter's eagle clarifies that aesthetic attributes are representations that do not constitute the presentation of a given concept; namely, they are not the object given in intuition, which corresponds to it; they only express the implications of the concept at issue or its affinity with other concepts. In fact, the representation 'eagle' does not belong to the concept of a deity; associated with this concept, however, it may recall the idea of regality, which is contained in or connected to it and is one of its logical attributes, along with power and justice, which the lightning in the eagle's claws – the lightning bolts of retribution – may evoke, suggesting both the rapidity and the unpredictability with which the eagle swoops down on its prey, and through it how divine punishment may strike.[32] Moreover, the

[31] KU § 49, AA 05: 315.

[32] Logical attributes represent "what lies in our concepts". Kant also calls them 'marks', meaning "that in a thing which constitutes a part of the cognition of it, or – what is the same – a partial representation (*Partialvorstellung*), insofar as it is considered as ground of cognition of the whole representation" (Log, AA 09: 58). Aesthetic attributes "go alongside (*zur Seite gehen*)" (KU § 49, AA 05: 315) logical ones: the imagination produces them in addition to logical attributes; they are associated with them but, as the eagle example clarifies, do not contribute to the presentation of the concept, the content of which is constituted by logical attributes.

lightning could recall the light of creation that breaks the darkness and thereby God's creative presence in the world, etc.[33] Kant presumably expected his readers to be able to spell out these and many other associations through which, he claims, we can approximate a presentation of the rational idea of divinity[34] or yield the aesthetic idea that serves it "instead of logical presentation".[35]

According to the passage under consideration, aesthetic attributes yield an aesthetic idea by inviting the imagination to spread itself over a multitude of related representations that make one think more than can be conceptually grasped. A final point to note is that, although Kant claims that an aesthetic idea may serve an idea of reason "instead of logical presentation", he suggests that its main function is that of animating the mind, which it does precisely "by opening up for it the prospect of an immeasurable field of related representations".[36] He thereby seems to suggest that what may appear to be a cognitive function of these representations of the imagination is actually only an aesthetic one. As we will see, however, this is not his last word on the subject.

For the purposes of this paper, it is worth recalling an important remark in the lines that immediately follow. Kant claims that an effect on the mind such as that just described is occasioned not only in painting or sculpture, "where the names of the attributes are commonly used", but also in poetry, which derives "the spirit" that animates its works "solely from the aesthetic attributes of the objects, which go alongside the logical ones". These attributes, Kant claims, rephrasing a now familiar point, "give the imagination an impetus to think more, although in an undeveloped way, than can be comprehended in a concept, and hence in a determinate linguistic expression".[37] To illustrate this claim, he then offers two poetic examples. I will briefly touch on the first, before moving on to the notion of spirit invoked by Kant. Kant quotes the following verse, attributed to Friedrich II of Prussia:

[33] See S. Budick, *Kant and Milton*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) and London 2010, p. 298, who also hints at a possible source of this passage from § 49 in Meier's *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften* (Halle 1754-1759) (see ivi, pp. 283-286).

[34] Cf. KU § 49, AA 05: 314.

[35] KU § 49, AA 05: 315.

[36] One of the reasons why Kant calls 'ideas' representations of the imagination is that they "at least strive toward something lying beyond the bounds of experience, and thus seek to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason (of intellectual ideas), which gives them the appearance of an objective reality". While these concepts can be thought, their objects cannot become contents of our experience. Through aesthetic ideas, they are made sensible (KU § 49, AA 05: 314). Further ahead in the text, he will touch on a second reason.

[37] KU § 49, AA 05: 315.

Let us depart from life without grumbling and without regretting anything, leaving the world behind us replete with good deeds. Thus does the sun, after it has completed its daily course, still spread a gentle light across the heavens; and the last rays that it sends forth into the sky are its last sighs for the well-being of the world.[38]

In his comment on these lines,[39] Kant underscores how "the great king"

animates his idea of reason of a cosmopolitan disposition even at the end of life by means of an attribute that the imagination (in the recollection of everything agreeable in a beautiful summer day, drawn to a close, which a bright evening calls to mind) associates with that representation, and which arouses a multitude of sensations and supplementary representations for which no expression is found.[40]

This comment recalls the process through which aesthetic attributes yield an aesthetic idea. 'Animates' is a key word in the passage: As we have seen, according to Kant, an aesthetic idea serves primarily to animate the mind, and it (or the attributes that yield it) animates the mind insofar as it is, so to speak, an invitation to thought.[41] At base, what the lines he quotes offer is a way to apprehend an aspect of life. By associating a virtuous person's departure from life with a sunset on a beautiful day, the poetic speaker invites the reader to adopt a way of apprehending that moment or thinking about it; he suggests what we might call a "frame" for it that Kant seems to consider both apt and aesthetically pleasurable as a way of characterizing the (focal) subject.[42] The king's verse may not be particularly original or inspiring, but it is important to grasp what is implied by Kant's choice to quote it, namely that part of the value of this poem depends on the experiential and emotional responses that the framing situation (a sunset on a beautiful summer's day) evokes and causes us to transfer to the focal subject – a wealth of thoughts and feelings that, while not fully determined

[38] KU § 49, AA 05: 315-316.

[39] As it is recalled in the editorial notes of the English translation of the third *Critique*, the lines quoted by Kant in their German translation are the conclusion of Friedrich's poem *Au Maréchal Keith, Imitation du troisième livre de Lucrèce: "Sur les vaines terreurs de la mort et les frayeurs d'une autre vie"*. The original reads: "Oui, finissons sans trouble, et mourons sans regrets,/En laissant l'Univers comblé de nos bienfaits./Ainsi l'Astre du jour, au bout de sa carrière,/Répand sur l'horizon une douce lumière,/Et les derniers rayons qu'il darde dans les air/Sont les derniers soupirs qu'il donne à l'Univers" (I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. by P. Guyer, Eng trans. by P. Guyer and E. Matthews, Cambridge University Press, New York 2000, p. 382).

[40] KU § 49, AA 05: 316.

[41] I owe this expression to P.W. Bruno, *Kant's Concept of Genius. Its Origin and Function in the Third Critique*, Continuum, London 2010, p. 136.

[42] I am here applying concepts and terms suggested by E. Camp, *Two Varieties of Literary Imagination: Metaphor, Fiction, and Thought Experiments*, in "Midwest Studies in Philosophy", 33, 2009, pp. 107-130, pp. 110-111 and p. 118.

by the poem, are "adequate to what it expresses".[43] Kant makes a good point here, as in many cases the value of a poem consists, at least in part, in the value of following the thought process that it initiates by offering a perspective on its subject.[44]

Kant's example is important for another reason as well. It suggests that the meaning of a poem cannot be reduced to sentence meaning: poetry (often) communicates meaning figuratively, imagistically.[45] I will return to this in section 4. For now, however, I wish to turn to the notion of spirit. We have already encountered two different but related uses of this word. As we have seen, Kant calls 'spirit' the genius talent of hitting upon the expression of aesthetic ideas through which the subjective disposition of the mind produced by them can be communicated to others.[46] He also calls 'spirit' a feature of successful works of art, however, originating from the animating effect of aesthetic attributes.

2. *On the Concept of Spirit*

To sketch what Kant means by 'spirit', I will begin with the second of the two uses of the word mentioned above. We find an interesting occurrence of it at the end of § 48 of the third *Critique*. The section is devoted to the relation between genius and taste, and at its close Kant observes that a would-be work of beautiful art such as a poem or a piece of music can fail in two ways, namely insofar as one perceives in it either "genius without taste" or "taste without genius".[47] The first case is that of works that, while they perhaps do not lack originality and ideas, are not brought "in line with the understanding"; that is, the ideas that they contain are not expressed in a way that makes them communicable. The result is therefore "nothing but nonsense".[48] The second case is that of products that, while "it is expected that they ought, at least in part, to reveal themselves as beautiful

[43] Angela Breitenbach makes this point about art in general (see A. Breitenbach, *One Imagination in Experiences of Beauty and Achievements of Understanding*, in "British Journal of Aesthetics", 60, 1, 2020, pp. 71-88, p. 74).

[44] P. Lamarque, 'Semantic Finegrainedness and Poetic Value', in J. Gibson (ed.), *The Philosophy of Poetry*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, pp. 18-36, p. 31 makes this point.

[45] Discussing the question of poetic meaning, John Gibson claims that we often have to look beyond a poem's language and "toward something this language creates, something fundamentally imaginative and not linguistic" (J. Gibson, *The Question of Poetic Meaning*, in "Nonsite", 4, 2011, http://nonsite.org/article/the-question-of-poetic-meaning, accessed 22/08/20, p. 8). I think that Kant would sympathize with this view.

[46] See KU § 49, AA 05: 317.

[47] KU § 48, AA 05: 312.

[48] KU § 50, AA 05: 319.

art", are such that we find that they lack something, even if we find "nothing in them to criticize as far as taste is concerned". Diagnosing the fault, Kant changes a crucial word: he says not that they are without genius, but that they are "without spirit". A poem, he claims, "can be quite pretty and elegant, but without *spirit*".[49]

Having said this, he shifts from a quality in the work to a quality in the artist, defining spirit, "in an aesthetic significance", as "the animating (*belebende*) principle in the mind"[50] and as "originality of thought (*Originalität des Gedanken*)".[51] That (and how) the two uses of the word are connected becomes immediately clear when Kant claims that the "material" that this principle uses to animate the soul "is that which purposively sets the mental powers into motion, i.e., into a play that is self-maintaining and even strengthens the powers to that end".[52] It is worth noting that this description closely recalls that of the state of mind – the harmonious interplay of the understanding and the imagination – on which taking pleasure in the beautiful rests.[53] Not by chance, it will turn out that the "material" Kant is speaking of consists in aesthetic ideas, that the imagination, in forming these ideas, is both free and in agreement with the understanding, that spirit, from an aesthetic point of view, is just "the faculty for the presentation of aesthetic ideas",[54] and that aesthetic ideas are precisely what a work must express in order to count as beautiful (as Kant will suggest shortly after, in § 51).

It follows that a work that lacks spirit will lack beauty as well and, ultimately, will fail to have an animating effect on the soul. Artistic beauty seems to require that, in addition to conforming to taste, an artwork must demonstrate a capacity to have this animating effect on the audience. 'Animation' emerges as a crucial term – one that, as I hope to show, can also help us to understand how

[49] KU § 49, AA 05: 313.
[50] KU § 49, AA 05: 313.
[51] Anth § 71, AA 07: 248.
[52] KU § 49, AA 05: 313.
[53] See KU Einl. VII and §§ 9 and 12. Briefly, according to Kant, the pleasure we take in the beautiful is connected with the mere apprehension (*apprehensio*) of the form of an object of intuition and expresses "nothing but the suitability of that object to the cognitive faculties that are in play in the reflecting power of judgment, insofar as they are in play". He assumes that the apprehension of forms in the imagination cannot take place without the reflecting power of judgment's comparing them "to its faculty for relating intuitions to concepts". If in this comparison the imagination is "unintentionally brought into accord with the understanding, as the faculty of concepts, through a given representation and a feeling of pleasure is thereby aroused", then the object must be regarded as purposive for the reflecting power of judgment and called beautiful (KU Einl. VII, AA 05: 189-190).
[54] KU § 49, AA 05: 314.

aesthetic and cognitive value interact in a work of art.

2.1 *Letter and Spirit*

'To animate' is a verb that, in different forms, often occurs in the sections we are examining. A telling case is the definition of the aesthetic idea quoted above, in which Kant claims that an aesthetic idea is a representation of the imagination associated with a given concept, which allows for the addition to it (*hinzu denken läßt*) "of much that is unnameable, the feeling of which animates (*belebt*) the cognitive faculties and combines spirit with the mere letter of language".[55] The animation of the cognitive faculties is put in relation to the combination of the spirit with the letter. Kant is likely referring to the well-known Pauline distinction and opposition between letter and spirit – "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life".[56]

This Pauline trope is multifaceted, but the aspect that is most relevant here is the suggestion of a meaning ('spirit') that exceeds the surface sense of a text and therefore prompts (hermeneutical) reflection.[57] Kant seems to connect this prompting of thoughts with Spirit's life-giving power, but he replaces the Pauline Spirit with his aesthetic notion of spirit. Kantian spirit – "in an aesthetic significance" – gives spirit to the artwork through the aesthetic attributes that yield the aesthetic idea, and expressing this idea animates the mind (of the observer). A work that has spirit is simply a work that, in presenting a concept (a theme) prompts a process of thought that cannot be fully attained by language[58] – that cannot be encapsulated by the 'letter' – for it cannot be made fully intelligible through concepts. It is a work that opens a wealth of possible conceptual determinations, and thus of significance. The products of genius are clearly great art: works we are inclined to return to and further explore.

As we have seen, for Kant it is indeed a feature of (successful) poetry that it offers, for the presentation of a given concept, a form that connects the presentation "with a fullness of thought to which no linguistic expression is fully adequate".[59] He also describes this fullness of thought by saying that the representation of the imagination "aesthetically enlarges the concept itself

[55] KU § 49, AA 05: 316.
[56] 2 Cor 3, 6; see also Rm 2, 29 and 7, 6.
[57] On this see P.S. Fiddes and G. Bader (eds.), *The Spirit and the Letter. A Tradition and a Reversal*, Bloomsbury, London 2013.
[58] Cf. KU § 49, AA 05: 314.
[59] KU § 53, AA 05: 326.

in an unbounded way".[60] This is a curious expression, and what it means is unclear. I suppose that Kant is suggesting that the concept is made richer by an overflow of the intuitive content that is added to it by the "creative" imagination. But in what sense 'richer', if, as he says, the representation of the imagination "gives more to think about than can be grasped and made distinct in it"?[61] This impossibility of making it "distinct", recalling Baumgarten's confused representations, may provide a clue in this regard.

2.2 *Excursus: Aesthetic Ideas as the Heir of Confused Representations*

Without entering into the details of Baumgarten's aesthetics,[62] for our purposes it is sufficient to recall that the "father of aesthetics",[63] arguing from a Leibnizian standpoint, described as 'confused' those representations that derive from the senses[64] and which therefore have two defining characteristics: while they are sufficient for recognizing things and distinguishing them from other things – and in this sense are 'clear' – we cannot enumerate or analyze, namely make *distinct*, their distinguishing features. In fact, for a representation to be confused, it is necessary that its marks are not distinct from each other.[65] Baumgarten considered these representations (the confused clarity of which he also labelled "extensive clarity")[66] highly poetic, and he therefore recommend their use in poetry.[67] Now, extensive clarity is a function of confusion, namely of the number of marks (*notae*) of the thing represented together in a single representation. This means that in a sense representation that is extensively clearer than others, more parts of the sensed object will be represented. For Baumgarten, the term 'confused' has a positive connotation. Confused/*confusus* derives from the Latin verb *confundere*, which is a compound of the prefix '*con'* ('together' or 'with') and *fundere*. Interestingly, the latter word, in addition to meaning 'to fuse', also means 'to spread out' and 'to

[60] KU § 49, AA 05: 315.
[61] KU § 49, AA 05: 315.
[62] See S. Tedesco, *L'estetica di Baumgarten*, Aesthetica, Palermo 2000 for a detailed presentation of Baumgarten's theory.
[63] On this see Amoroso 2000, pp. 37-70.
[64] See A.G. Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* (Lateinisch-Deutsch), ed. by H. Paetzold, Meiner, Hamburg 1983, § 3, p. 8.
[65] Ivi, § 13, p. 14.
[66] See ivi, §§ 16-17, p. 16.
[67] A fine sketch of Baumgarten's argument for this claim is offered by F.C. Beiser, *Diotimas's Children. German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, p. 128.

extend' – whence, as Frederick Beiser notes, "Baumgarten's choice of the term *extensive*".[68]

We can read the aesthetic enlargement of a concept through an aesthetic idea, of which Kant speaks, as a transformation of Baumgarten's extensive clarity.[69] It is significant that both kinds of representations, namely Baumgarten's extensive clear sense representations and Kant's aesthetic ideas (and through them aesthetically enlarged concepts), are involved in the aesthetic success of a poem – poetry, as we have seen, is the art in which, according to Kant, the faculty of aesthetic ideas "can reveal itself in its full measure".

A further point is worth considering. Extensive clarity is a characteristic of sense representations, and sense representations are of individual things. It follows that the greater a representation's extensive clarity (that is, its poetic character), the more accurately it will represent its object, or the more it is determined. Thus, Baumgarten arrives at the conclusion that it is poetic that the things to be represented in a poem are as determined as possible, namely are individuals, since individuals are completely determined:[70] the domain of poetry is the vast realm of particular things.

Kant partly makes a similar point. Aesthetically enlarged concepts are not sense representations, but they are enlarged through aesthetic ideas, which are "inner intuitions" – that is, presumably, particular mental representations: the inner picturing of thoughts or images of some sort. One reason that Kant puts forward to explain why aesthetic ideas, although they are representations of the imagination, are indeed called 'ideas', is that "no concept can be fully adequate to them".[71] Aesthetic ideas may be both similar to ordinary images (e.g. of a table) and dissimilar to them, as no determinate concept is completely adequate to them. According to Kant, one way in which this inadequacy may arise is when "the poet ventures […] to make that of which there are examples in experience, e.g., death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc., sensible beyond the limits of experience, with a completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature, by means of an imagination that emulates the

[68] Ivi, p. 127.

[69] This is also shown, in a much more detailed way, by C. La Rocca, 'Das Schöne und das Schatten. Dunkle Vorstellungen und ästhetische Erfahrung zwischen Baumgarten und Kant', in H. F. Klemme, M. Pauen, M.-L. Raters (eds.), *Im Schatten des Schönen. Die Ästhetik des Häßlichen in historischen Ansätzen und Aktuellen Debatten*, Aisthesis Verlag, Bielefeld 2006, pp. 19-64.

[70] See Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, cit., §§ 18-19, pp. 16-18.

[71] See footnote 36.

precedent of reason in attaining to a maximum".[72] Love, vice, envy, and the like are abstract concepts, dissimilar to rational ideas insofar as they can have empirical instances. As Mojca Kuplen observes, however, "there is no single and concretely perceivable object that would correspond to such concepts", as their full meaning "extends beyond" their empirical instantiation.[73] For example, the concept of love involves phenomenological features, emotional aspects, beliefs, intentions, moral aspects, etc., that cannot be completely presented in an example in ordinary experience. So, Kant could be envisaging poetic presentations of love, vice, etc., that are so rich and detailed that they display a completeness akin to that of reason in its search for a maximum. Through them, a poet may offer what could be called a case or an aspect of love *par excellence*.

Interestingly, this view has a sort of precedent in an example put forward in the *Logik Blomberg*, a *Nachschrift* from the 1770s. This example can be applied, without relevant changes, to the "experience-oriented"[74] aesthetic ideas we are dealing with here. Discussing *claritas extensiva* as "the right path to liveliness, in that it brings with it much sensibility", it is asserted that the completion of the perfections of all our cognitions "is finally to give them sensibility, so that one represents the universal in particular circumstances and cases and thinks of the *abstractum in concreto* in a single, individual sensible case", as when "I think of friendship, true love, and the mutual helpfulness that flows from these, in the case of Damon and Pythias. Here, then, I think the universal in individual cases. But in this way my cognition becomes lively".[75]

As the editor of the lectures on logic recalls, Damon and Pythias were "two young Pythagoreans, whose loyalty to one another epitomizes true friendship. Pythias was condemned to death for plotting against Dionysius I of Syracuse, but he was allowed to leave to settle his affairs when Damon offered to die in his place if his friend did not return. Pythias returned just in time, and Dionysius was so moved by their friendship that he set both men free".[76] What

[72] KU § 49, AA 05: 314.

[73] M. Kuplen, *Cognitive Interpretation of Kant's Theory of Aesthetic Ideas*, in "Estetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics", 56/12, 1, 2019, pp. 48-64, p. 53.

[74] I owe the term 'experience-oriented' to S. Matherne, *The Inclusive Interpretation of Kant's Aesthetic Ideas*, in "British Journal of Aesthetics", 53, 2013, pp. 21-39.

[75] V-Lo/Blomberg § 135, AA 24: 129.

[76] Kant, *Lectures on logic*, cit., editorial notes p. 676. Kant was probably familiar with the story via the third book of Cicero's *De officiis*. Bernard Williams's famous case of Jim and the Indians (see J.J. Smart and B. Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1973, pp. 98-99) could be a contemporary version of

the passage from the lectures suggests is that a literary description of a case will better depict friendship than the abstract concepts of the philosopher. In fact, since the philosopher "considers many objects and cognizes little in many objects […] his cognitions are […] universal".[77]

According to this transcript, in poetry "one seeks to put forth marks that are coordinate with one another, of which one is immediately aware in the thing to be described, in order to make the concept of the thing lively. By this means one reaches aesthetic perfection in a cognition".[78] A concept that possesses liveliness, a quality that it acquires "through a multitude and a combination of coordinated representations", is "very rich, pregnant, beautiful".[79]

What infuses a concept with life is therefore extensive clarity, namely a multitude and a combination of coordinated representations. This is not far from what Kant claims about the activity of the imagination "in an aesthetic respect". Unlike its use in cognition, where it is "under the constraint of the understanding and is subject to the limitation of being adequate to its concept", in the aesthetic case "the imagination is free to provide, beyond that concord with the concept, unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept, but which it applies, not so much objectively, for cognition, as subjectively, for the animation of the cognitive powers, and thus also indirectly to cognitions".[80]

Liveliness, as the example of Damon and Pythias suggests, can also bring about "a greater correctness" in our cognition, as "we frequently omit, and have to omit, *in abstracto* marks which actually belong to the nature of the thing". These marks "can be restored when one considers the thing *in concreto*". Therefore, poets "can

the point made in the lecture.

[77] V-Lo/Blomberg § 135, AA 24: 127. A further example is offered in a discussion on the distinction between the extensive distinctness pursued by the poet and the intensive one pursued by the philosopher. The poet "piles marks one upon another. The philosopher, however, describes the same thing with intensive distinctness[;] he looks, namely, not to the multitude of the marks, but rather he seeks to represent really clearly and distinctly only a few marks, indeed, where possible, only a single one" (V-Lo/Blomberg § 28, AA 24: 57). Extensive distinctness is then connected to the liveliness of a cognition: "E.g., in a description of spring I represent it in a lively way through a multitude of marks coordinate with one another. The poet does it thus. He shows, e.g., the budding flowers, the new green of the forests, the cavorting herds, the renewed rays of the sun, the lovely, charming air[,] the revival of the whole of nature" (V-Lo/Blomberg § 135, AA 24: 126).

[78] V-Lo/Blomberg § 135, AA 24: 126. On the role of this notion, see K. Pollok, *Kant's Theory of Normativity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2017, pp. 40-43.

[79] V-Lo/Blomberg § 250, AA 24: 252. Traces of this view surface in Kant's "apology for sensibility" in § 8 of the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) (see AA 07: 143).

[80] KU § 49, AA 05: 317.

frequently be very helpful to the philosopher".[81] Kant's position in the third *Critique* seems more moderate; there, he speaks of an indirect application to cognition of the material provided by the imagination. However, his talk of the "nourishment" provided by poetry to the understanding seems to be a restatement of this point. By giving life to the concepts of the understanding "through the imagination", poetry, it seems, also offers food for thought. But is it really a cognitive value that is at issue in this nourishment, and if so, what kind? How does it relate to the "free play of the imagination" that poetry carries out?[82] I will begin to answer these questions by substantiating Kant's description of poetry with further material from his lectures on logic and anthropology.

3. *Aesthetic and Cognition: Remnants of Aesthetic Rationalism?*

In Kant's lectures on anthropology, the aim of poetry is often described by using the word 'entertainment (*Unterhaltung*)'. Thus, in the *Menschenkunde* (WS 1781/82), we read that the "main purpose (*Hauptabsicht*)" of poetry (*Dichtkunst*) is the entertainment of our imagination and emotions; however, it is immediately added that in this the understanding is also involved, such that poetry entertains the mind in the most harmonious action.[83] First of all, the understanding is involved in poetry in the role of rule-giver. As the Mrongovius transcript reads, "[p]oetry is an occupation of sensibility, arranged by the understanding".[84] Poetry, another transcript likewise affirms, is the great culture of our "sensitive cognition (*Sinnlichen Erkentnisse*), and the understanding is only the means to put the representations in order".[85] The idea that the understanding organizes poetry's occupation with sensibility (otherwise the imagination would be without order and absolutely

[81] V-Lo/Blomberg § 135, AA 24: 129. Abstract concepts, Kant maintains, are often only "glittering poverty (*schimmernde Armseligkeiten*)" (Anth § 9, AA 07: 145). Incidentally, studies in cognitive science quoted by Kuplen (Kuplen, *Cognitive Interpretation of Kant's Theory of Aesthetic Ideas*, cit.) suggest that perceptual information plays an important role in our comprehension and full understanding of abstract thoughts.

[82] KU § 51, AA 05: 321.

[83] Cf. V-Anth/Mensch, AA 25: 982-983.

[84] Anth/Mron, AA 25: 1279.

[85] V-Anth/Busolt, AA 25: 1468. Interestingly, the role of the understanding here is similar to that of the formal devices of poetry. In fact, for Kant, the poetic play of the imagination needs verses, "*Sylbenmaas*" or rhythmic movement (*taktmässigen Gang*), because by means of them "the imagination is bound to certain rules, and the rhythmic affects our mind more" (V-Anth/Busolt, AA 25: 1467). The arrangement of words in verses blends freedom with necessity. In a good poem, "rhyme happily brings the thought to conclusion" (Anth § 71, AA 07: 248).

chaotic) is nicely expressed in the *Anthropologie Mrongovius* (WS 1784/1785), where we read that in poetry the understanding "must shine through (*hervorscheinen*)".[86] According to a modest reading, this expression could simply mean that, even if poetry does not aim at truth, a poet does not have license to say what he will: he must always observe "an analogue of truth (*ein Analogon der Wahrheit*)"; e.g., the conditions of his story should agree with the assumed character.[87] This means that the poet's freedom in imagining is limited through the condition of possibility.[88]

Admittedly, the relation between poetry and truth is tricky. As we have seen, in the third *Critique* Kant maintains that poetry "plays with the illusion which it produces at will, yet without thereby being deceitful". The "rationalist" background of the transcripts from which I am quoting, reflected in their vocabulary, is cognitively more liberal, for according to the rationalist conception, the mind is essentially a power of representation: all mental states are representations of something in the world. Again, a brief reference to Baumgarten may be helpful.

Baumgarten dealt with the intriguing question of poetic truth in an elegant way, building on a distinction between two kinds of fiction, namely those that he called *heterocosmica*, which are about something impossible in the actual world, and those that he called *utopica*, which are about something that is impossible in every possible world.[89] As no representation is possible when it comes to the latter, clearly only the former can be the object of poetic representation. According to his *Metaphysica* (see §§ 90, 92), there is a notion of metaphysical truth that equates to conformity with the universal principles of non-contradiction, reason and sufficient reason. As not only existent but also merely possible things conform to such principles, it follows that the poet can engage in fiction and still know something (metaphysically) true.

In his *Aesthetica* (1750), Baumgarten then defines metaphysical truth as objective: it is truth that concerns things in themselves. From this he distinguishes the subjective truth, namely the truth of our representations: these are true insofar as they represent true objects. Subjective truth can be of two forms: it is logical if my representations are distinct; it is aesthetic if they are mingled with many sense representations.[90] Having claimed that aesthetic

[86] V-Anth/Mron, AA 25: 1279.
[87] V-Anth/Parow, AA 25: 323.
[88] V-Anth/Parow, AA 25: 326.
[89] Baumgarten, *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, cit., § 52, p. 40.
[90] See Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, cit., §§ 423-424, pp. 269-270. On Baumgarten's

truth is known through the senses, Baumgarten further states that in aesthetic truth the mind descends to the *singularia* – this does not happen with the objects of science – and represents objects of both the actual and other possible worlds. With regard to this latter case, he speaks of *veritas heterocosmica*, worrying not about whether the objects are real in this world but only about whether they are possible in a certain connection to things.[91] The reproduction of individuality could then be considered the standard of aesthetic truth.[92] It therefore seems that two domains of truth are open to poetry: the domain of truths concerning the *singularia* of the actual world (with regard to which poetry can recover the richness of ordinary experience that is lost in the process of abstraction required by logical truth)[93] and the domain of heterocosmic truths.

As for Kant's position on this tangled topic, at least as documented in the lectures on logic, a first thing that can be observed is that he initially seems to grant that "for aesthetic perfection, truth is […] required". At the same time, he admits that

> with the aesthetically perfect we do not require as much truth as with the logically perfect. With the aesthetic, something may be true only *tolerabiliter*. In this way it is aesthetically true that Milton represents the angels in the paradise lost as quarreling, and caught up in battle, for who knows whether this cannot occur.[94]

In the *Wiener Logik* (from the early 1780s) we find a specification of aesthetic or subjective truth in terms of "the agreement of cognition with the subject's mode of thought". Aesthetic truth, it is claimed, concerns how something appears "to our senses and seems to be". According to this transcript, the poet only needs this kind of truth. This conception is nicely exemplified as follows: "The sun sinks into the water, says the poet. If he were to say that the earth turns on its axis, then he would assimilate to logical truth and not be a poet".[95] To be a poet, one has to pursue aesthetic truth; however, as it is stated in the *Logik Jäsche*, truth, as "the ground of unity through the relation of our cognition to the object", and therefore of the harmonious union of unity and

conception of truth, see S. Tedesco, *L'estetica di Baumgarten*, cit., pp. 113-127.

[91] See Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, cit., § 441, p. 281.

[92] In connection with poetry, Baumgarten also uses the notion of verisimilitude (see Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, cit., §§ 478, 492, 502, 584). Beiser takes this notion to refer to "what is *like* truth but not truth itself" (Beiser, *Diotimas's Children. German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing*, cit., p. 154). This may be too strong. Baumgarten seems to suggest that the poet remains in the field of truth; he only moves away from the truth that is proved, namely from certainty (see Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, cit., § 483, p. 309).

[93] See Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, cit., §§ 556-564.

[94] V-Lo/Blomberg § 27, AA 24: 56.

[95] V-Lo/Wiener, AA 24: 810.

manifoldness – recall that "*ordo plurium in uno*" is Baumgarten's definition of metaphysic truth[96] – "remains the *conditio sine qua non*" of aesthetic perfection, "the foremost negative condition, apart from which something cannot please taste universally", since "mere manifoldness without unity cannot satisfy us".[97]

A very similar passage can be found in the *Wiener Logik*, in which Kant specifies that truth or logical perfection is a merely negative condition, since in the aesthetic case cognition is not the principal end, "which consists in pleasantness and agreement of sensibility. Because, however, no satisfaction can arise where the understanding does not join in and uncover errors, with aesthetic perfection there can be no contradictions. No man, accordingly, can make progress in things of taste unless he has made logical perfection his basis".[98] The role of truth as agreement with the universal principles of being seems to be taken on by the understanding as rule-giver. A conception along these lines is also endorsed in the third *Critique*, since Kant admits that "the scientific element in any art […], which concerns truth in the presentation of its object, […] is to be sure the indispensable condition (*conditio sine qua non*) of beautiful art, but not the art itself".[99]

It is clear that the more Kant moves away from the rationalist conception of the mind and toward a strict distinction between sensibility and understanding, the more he tends to deny that we know the world through sensation, or that aesthetic perception is a form of knowledge.[100] In the *Logik Dohna-Wundlacken* (a transcript deriving from lectures given in the early 1790s), subjective truth, namely the truth with which the poet is concerned, is directly equated to "universal illusion": "The poetic – it is claimed – is always true aesthetically, seldom logically".[101] 'Aesthetically true' is glossed in the *Logik* as "nothing more than a universal semblance".[102]

However, it is also important to consider that in his lectures on anthropology, Kant had elaborated the distinction between illusion and deception (*Betrug*) that surfaces in the third *Critique*. Illusion is an appearance that does not deceive but may please[103] and that remains after it has been revealed, whereas a (fraudulent) deception

[96] See A.G. Baumgarten *Metaphysica* (editio 7) (facsimile reproduction of the edition Halae Magdeburgicae, 1779), 1963, § 89, p. 24.

[97] Log, AA 09: 39.

[98] V-Lo/Wiener, AA 24: 810-811.

[99] KU § 60, AA 05: 355.

[100] See Anth § 7 Anm., AA 07: 140-141 for a clear statement of what Kant considers a "great error of the Leibniz-Wolffian school". On Kant's farewell to perfectionism, see Pollok, cit., Ch. 1.

[101] V-Lo/Dohna, AA 24: 709.

[102] Log, AA 09: 39.

[103] V-Anth/Pillau, AA 25: 745.

disappears when it is unmasked. Furthermore, while in the case of illusion "we often do not want to know the truth",[104] in the case of deception "we do indeed want to know the truth, but are not always acquainted with it". "We often want illusion, but never deception".[105] On the basis of this distinction, Kant suggests that there is a difference between fictionalizing (*dichten*) in lying and in poetry. A poet goes along with the convention that he is supposed to lie to us, but this is a completely different form of lying than that of the liar or the deceiver.[106] Poetry "does not trick, for its aim is directed not at the understanding but at entertainment, and in the case of poetry I even want to be tricked".[107] This is just what the imagination "as a productive cognitive faculty" does when, as Kant claims in the third *Critique*, it creates "as it were, another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it".[108]

In addition to distinguishing between illusion and deception, Kant also points out a difference between poetic untruth and error: "In poetic representations, cognitions (*Erkenntnisse*) are untrue (*unwahr*) but are not errors, for one knows that they are untrue". An error is "set in opposition to truth as a contrary", for it is not "a mere lack of cognition and of truth, but a hindrance to these as well", like a space in the soul that is filled up with "erroneous cognitions".[109] As poetic representations do not aim at truth, do not occupy, as it were, a space in the cognitive storehouse of our mind, they do not belong to it and therefore are not an obstacle to knowledge. But if they do not belong to it, how can they be helpful for knowledge or have cognitive value of any kind? That they *can* have it seems to be suggested in a passage from the *Logik Jäsche*:

> […] no one may hope to make progress in the belles lettres if he has not made logical perfection the ground of his cognition. It is in the greatest possible unification of logical with aesthetic perfection in general, in respect to those cognitions that are both to instruct and to entertain, that the character and the art of the genius actually shows itself.[110]

[104] "From poets I want only entertainment; but whether the thing is true or not does not concern me" (V-Anth/Mron, AA 25: 1281).

[105] Cf. V-Anth/Mron, AA 25: 1253.

[106] Cf. V-Anth/Parow, AA 25: 322.

[107] V-Anth/Mron, AA 25: 1279.

[108] KU § 49, AA 05: 314. On Kant's concept of creative imagination, see S. Matherne, 'Kant's Theory of Imagination', in A. Kind (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Imagination*, Routledge, London and New York 2016, pp. 55-68 and G. Zöller, '"The Faculty of Intuition A priori". Kant on the Productive Power of the Imagination', in G. Gentry, K. Pollok (eds.), *The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2019, pp. 66-85.

[109] V-Anth/Mron, AA 25: 1224.

[110] Log, AA 09: 39.

Things may be more complicated than they seem, however.

3.1 *A Kantian Version of The* Miscere Utile Dulci

The first sentence of the passage just quoted reaffirms the fundamental, although negative, role of truth in art. Since logical perfection consists in the agreement of cognition with the object, it sets as a condition for progress in the *belles lettres* that the *littérateur* must ground his work in truth.[111] The second sentence adds something new and interesting, however, as it hints at cognitions "that are both to instruct and to entertain" and suggests that genius shows itself in the realization, in them, of the greatest possible combination of aesthetic and logical perfection, namely of subjective and objective truth. The expression used in the passage recalls the famous claim in Horace's *Ars poetica*: "*Omne tulit punctum*, *qui miscuit utile dulci*, *Lectorem delectando pariterque monendo*" (342-343). Horace was imagining a competition between different kinds of poetry. In fact, some lines before the one just quoted, he writes: "*Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae*" (335-337). Assuming that this categorization is not evaluative, the "Omne tulit punctum" sentence could be read as Horace's answer to the question "What is the best option?" He is suggesting that, given these three options, the best choice is the one that does both things, i.e. a blend of practical advice and beautiful writing.

However, in spite of the critical success of the *topos* of *miscere utile dulci*, it is not clear whether poetry should pursue both aims, namely to instruct and to entertain, and the question arises as to whether instruction and entertainment are to be bound together or separated. To mention a modern example, in his influential *Les beaux art réduit à un même principe* (1746), Charles Batteux divided the fine arts, which he had reduced to the single principle of the imitation of beautiful nature, into two categories: those arts the aim of which is pleasure, and those that combine pleasure and usefulness. He placed music, poetry, painting, sculpture, and dance in the first category, and eloquence and architecture in the second. Interestingly, he considered theater a combination of all arts.[112]

As for the passage from the *Logik Jäsche*, what makes its appli-

[111] Although the expression *belles lettres* usually meant 'Greek and Latin, eloquence and poetry', in this context I take it to refer to the latter.

[112] Ch. Batteux, *Les beaux art réduit à un même principe*, Durand, Paris 1746, p. 6 and p. 45.

cation to poetry problematic is that it refers to a group of sections in Meier's *Auszug* (§§ 22-34) that are devoted to the perfection of learned cognition (*gelehrte Erkenntniss*). For Kant, instruction and entertainment have different grounds – according to the lectures, subjective truth and distinction, respectively. And yet he (like Meier) also acknowledges that, although aesthetic and logical perfection can conflict, instruction can benefit from entertainment. With an incorrect attribution, in a lecture on logic, we read the following: "Horace says, You should be *suaviter in modo*, i.e., pleasant in manner, *sed fortiter in re*, i.e., thorough in method (*gründlich in der Methode*). The first is aesthetic perfection, the second logical".[113] The sentence also occurs in the Mrongovius transcript of Kant's lectures on anthropology, where it is preceded by the claim that "in some cognitions, logical and aesthetic worth (*Werth*)", namely instruction and entertainment, "are found together (*finden … zusammen statt*)", and where the '*fortiter in re*' is glossed as "*wichtig im Inhalt*", that is, important or significant in content.[114] This joint occurrence of aesthetic and logical perfection seems to match Horace's critical preference.

However, it is not clear whether the reference here is really to poetry. According to the *Menschenkunde*, truth and intellectual cognitions "improve very much through poetic expression. Truth uttered (*hervorgebracht*) in sentences, in verses, by far surpasses the prosaic expression, and everyone takes pleasure in learning them by heart".[115] This statement is followed by the remark that a verse has something in itself "by which a thought completely penetrates us (*uns ganz durchdringt*) as through a vehiculum".[116]

The point expressed in these lines is significant. They highlight the importance of literary achievement: It is not by chance that are we inclined to think that the encapsulation of general observations in memorable words is part of what makes authors "great".[117] But the view they present implies a separation of con-

[113] I. Kant, *Logik Hechsel*, in I. Kant, *Lectures on logic*, Eng. trans. and ed. by J.M. Young, Cambridge University Press, New York 1992, p. 416.

[114] V-Anth/Mron, AA 25: 1228. As both the editors of the lectures on anthropology and the editor of the lectures on logic recall, the quotation comes not from Horace but from the fifth Jesuit general Aquaviva's (1543-1615) *Industriae ad curandos animae morbos* (1606).

[115] As we have seen, Kant emphasizes that meter, rhyme, alliteration, and the like, besides creating a rhythm that tends to be pleasing, help us to understand and remember what is being said in a poem. On these related functions of formal poetic devices, see A.C. Ribeiro, *Toward a Philosophy of Poetry*, in "Midwest Studies in Philosophy", 33, 2009, pp. 61-77, pp. 72-74.

[116] V-Anth/Mensch, AA 25: 992.

[117] See on this P. Lamarque, *The Philosophy of Literature*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2009, pp. 232-234, who nonetheless suggests that what we likely admire in these

tent and form which seems to conflict with Kant's ultimate conception of genius, according to which genius involves both a creative talent for ideas *and* expressive ability. The "happy relation" of form and content (or aboutness) of which Kant speaks hints at a holistic kind of unity, at the idea of "a subject-realized-in-just-this-way", to borrow an expression by Peter Lamarque.[118] "Aquaviva's" view better applies to those products that belong to science and that please because they are "in accordance" with taste. As Kant emphasizes, however, this does not make them beautiful works of art: "The pleasing form which one gives to [them]", he claims, "is only the vehicle of communication and a manner, as it were, of presentation".[119] There is a *modus aestheticus* or *manner* "of putting thoughts together in a presentation" which has "no other standard than the feeling of unity in the presentation"; this manner is valid for beautiful art,[120] but, according to Kant, it is not a sufficient condition for something's counting as (fine) art.[121]

There are contents that can be expressed both in verse and in prosaic language and that are perhaps better communicated through verse, but poetry, Kant seems to think, cannot be reduced to the versification of content. So what space is left for the unification, in poetry, of cognitive and aesthetic value? Since both in the lectures and in the third *Critique* Kant points out that the main aim of poetry is, in the wording of the lectures, "to entertain", a more natural way to construct its cognitive value is to think of it as external to aesthetic value, a sort of side effect of a good poem. Is it in this way that "with all good poets" nourishment is given to the understanding,[122] or does Kant's conception of poetry allow for a closer connection between aesthetic and cognitive value? In the next and final section, I will try to show that there are reasons to attribute the second alternative to Kant.

cases, more than profundity of thought, is precision of expression.

[118] Lamarque, 'Semantic Finegrainedness and Poetic Value', cit., p. 29. A similar idea seems to be suggested by the transcript itself, in the observation that the rhyme is at its best when it is made in such a way that one is surprised to find the relevant word natural and believes that no better word or thought could be found to replace it (see V-Anth/Mensch, AA 25: 992).

[119] KU § 48, AA 05: 313. The same holds for "a moral treatise, or even a sermon": they can have "in themselves this form of beautiful art, though without seeming studied; but they are not on this account called works of beautiful art" (KU § 48, AA 05: 313).

[120] KU § 49, AA 05: 318-319.

[121] On the other hand, he finds it ridiculous that "someone speaks and decides like a genius […] in matters of the most careful rational inquiry" (KU § 47, AA 05: 310).

[122] V-Anth/Mron, AA 25: 1281; KU § 51, AA 05: 321.

4. *Kant's Moderate Aesthetic Cognitivism*

We have seen passages from the lectures that suggest that, insofar as poetry is an occupation of sensibility, arranged by the understanding, the role of the latter is simply to bring some kind of order to the representations of the imagination and to prevent contradictions between them. However, there are also hints at a stronger involvement of the understanding. In the *Menschenkunde*, we read that the understanding "must be […] secretly and unnoticedly instructed" by a poem, otherwise that poem will not be appreciated; if the understanding is not present, then even though our senses are entertained, the poem will be "insipid and tasteless (*fade und unschmackhaft*)".[123]

Tellingly, we also encounter a reformulation of the dictum from the first *Critique* to the effect that "[i]ntuitions without thoughts yield no knowledge, but thoughts without intuition are reflections without a subject, therefore both of them must be united (*Anaschauen ohne Gedanken giebt keine Erkennyniß, aber Gedanken ohne Anschauung sind Betrachtungen ohne Stoff, daher muß beides vereinigt warden*)".[124] The suggestion is that intuitions and thoughts must be combined; however, it is also pointed out that "one of them must shine out (*hervorleuchten*)", that is, "the main thing must be placed in one of them". Either the understanding or the imagination must set the end; since in poetry the most important thing is to engage the imagination, the understanding must always "come along (*hinzukommen*)", as if only casually (*nebenbei*). The point is then exemplified as follows: "when the poet adorns (*ausschmückt*) a whole succession of thoughts with images (*Bildern*), the beautiful must immediately shine, but the understanding must only come later (*hinterher kommen*) and the thought must not immediately shine through (*hervorscheinen*), but only in the aftertaste".[125]

These passages also shed light on the cognitive role that aesthetic ideas might play. As we have seen, aesthetic ideas are intuitions. However, since they cannot be brought to determinate concepts, they outrun the possibility of cognition. In a sense, they arouse a desire to know but also invalidate the means to knowledge. How they can nevertheless have a cognitive function is filled in by the passage just quoted, as it suggests that, while striking in their beau-

[123] V-Anth/Mensch, AA 25: 986-987.

[124] V-Anth/Mensch, AA 25: 987.

[125] V-Anth/Mensch, AA 25: 987-988; see also Anth § 71, AA 07: 246. While playing with the imagination, the poet meets the understanding by means of concepts, and thereby "improves and enlivens (*cultiviert und belebt*) it". What is beautiful must at the same time be a "strengthening (*Stärkung*) of our concepts" (V-Anth/Busolt, AA 25: 1465-1466).

ty, poetic images illustrate thoughts.

In fact, Kant claims that "the *painter of ideas* alone is the master of beautiful art",[126] and in the *Anthropologie Busolt* (WS 1788/89) the poet is described as trying to find images "to approximate more and more the concepts of the understanding".[127] This approximation is presented as a perfection (*Vollkommenheit*) that greatly helps the understanding: examples or intuitions enliven concepts, giving them force and clarity, and can thereby make them interesting.[128] Kant admires Milton in part because the latter always strives to provide intuitions, and "the clarity of intuitions and the novelty of the images cultivate (*Cultivieren*) the understanding a lot".[129] We often find claims like these in the lectures, and the third *Critique* does not radically break with the view they express.

Like the confused representations of the rationalist aesthetics, Kant's aesthetic ideas can "enlarge" the meaning of abstract concepts, bringing to mind a plurality of thoughts, feelings, and moods linked together and connected to these concepts, thereby furthering our understanding of them. Consider again the concept of love. Our ordinary explication of 'love' leaves unelaborated much of its meaning, in particular the experience-related features of its content. While we may experience love, there are likely limits to our understanding of the idea of love itself, deriving from the way our experience makes it available to us. A concrete presentation of love offered by a poem may carry forward features that we have not grasped from our own experience or offer a different perspective on this concept, making it more cognitively accessible to us and contributing to a richer understanding of it.[130] It would not be misleading to use the word 'learning' in this regard, even if the kind of knowledge acquired cannot be fully articulated in propositions. On the one hand, this knowledge is not discursive because it refers to the affective and emotional aspects associated with our concepts – aspects with which we can only be perceptually acquainted; on the other hand – think once more about 'love' – it is not discursive because our language is not rich enough to grasp all the aspects of love in its particular instances. Our concepts, and our words, refer

[126] Anth § 71, AA 07: 248.

[127] V-Anth/Busolt, AA 25: 1446.

[128] Cf. V-Anth/Busolt, AA 25: 1444. To be sure, "aesthetic distinctness through examples" may improve "understandability", but it is "of a completely different kind than distinctness through concepts as marks"; "examples are simply not marks and do not belong to the concept as parts but, as intuitions, to the use of the concept" (Log, AA 9: 62).

[129] V-Anth/Busolt, AA 25: 1466.

[130] This point is made by Kuplen, *Cognitive Interpretation of Kant's Theory of Aesthetic Ideas*, cit., pp. 59-60. See also M. Kuplen, *Art and Knowledge: Kant's Perspective*, in "Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics", 7, 2015, pp. 317-331.

to properties that one case of love shares with others of its kind, but they cannot represent its individual features and therefore leave them undetermined. An artistic presentation of love – the expression of an aesthetic idea associated with the concept – can bring together different emotional and affective aspects of an experience of love and the thoughts and beliefs connected to it; in giving a perceptible form to these mental states, it may offer the opportunity to recognize features of love that cannot be directly represented. Although we already possess the concept, in the presentation of new and perhaps unfamiliar aspects (or contexts) of its application, our understanding of it is improved.

Something similar may be claimed with regard to the other kinds of concepts that aesthetic ideas can sensibly represent, namely ideas of reason such as those of God, freedom, and immortality. Both abstract concepts and ideas of reason have no appropriate sensible intuition. The aesthetic attributes that provide an aesthetic idea – recall Jupiter's eagle – can offer a symbolic or metaphorical representation of an idea of reason. They are not part of its logical content, but they can express certain associations connected to it, which, in combination, yield an intuition that represents the idea, giving it content or meaning, as required by Kant's claim that concepts without intuitions are empty.[131] In this way, an aesthetic idea helps us to better understand what such an indeterminate concept means.[132] Kant's admiration of Milton's striving to provide intuitions may be connected to this effect of aesthetic ideas. After all, when he claims that the poet "ventures to make sensible rational ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, the kingdom of hell, eternity, creation, etc".,[133] it is natural to suppose that he is thinking of Milton, whom he considered a genius and associated with Shakespeare: "Milton, Shakespeare are geniuses".[134]

If this is correct, then one possibility when interpreting Kant's claim that aesthetic ideas as expressed in good poems are food for the understanding is to consider how, by imbuing abstract concepts and ideas of reason with intuitions, they can improve our understanding of them and give them more substantive meaning. This reading also helps to make sense of Kant's prudent statement

[131] A 52/B 75.

[132] The reference, in the *Menschenkunde*, to the dictum of the first *Critique* suggests that aesthetic ideas take on the role of intuition in ordinary cognition; in a sense, as presentations of particular concepts (of particular subjects or thematic concepts), they "are a means of occupying the emptiness" (Bruno, *Kant's Concept of Genius. Its Origin and Function in the Third Critique*, cit., p. 137) of thoughts without content (see KrV, A 51/B 75).

[133] KU § 49, AA 05: 314.

[134] V-Anth/Busolt, AA 25: 1497.

that aesthetic ideas are indirectly applied to cognition.[135] With regard to poetry, I would like to rephrase this statement by saying that their expression in good poems can have cognitive benefits.[136] As I have just suggested, these benefits consist mainly in the fact that such poems often initiate in readers/listeners a reflective process that makes them explicitly aware of aspects or implications of concepts (or experiences) that they formerly knew (or had) in an unarticulated way; this may also inspire them to re-evaluate their understanding of those concepts (or experiences).[137]

As a way of concluding these reflections, I would like to return to an aspect hinted at in section 1, namely the figurative, imagistic way in which poetry often communicates meaning. The crucial role of this feature of poetry now becomes clear, as it seems that, given the conceptually indeterminate character of aesthetic ideas, the only way to communicate them is through a non-discursive mode of expression, that is, by giving them a perceptible form of some kind. It may seem unlikely that this can be accomplished by an "art of speech". However, poetry can make thoughts and feelings perceivable in virtue of the figurative element that is characteristic of the art form. Kant is well aware of this feature of poetry, given his description of the poet as a "painter of ideas". In the third *Critique*, he hints at this indirectly. Explaining the pictorial arts as involving "the expression of ideas in sensible intuition", he adds in brackets: "not through representations of the mere imagination, which are evoked through words".[138] I take this remark to refer to the arts of speech dealt with in the preceding paragraphs. If this is correct, then Kant is assuming that in poetry, words function as a sort of trigger of inner representations of the imagination, conjuring meaning-rich images that evoke thoughts and feelings and promote a search for meaning which, to use Kant's words, "sets the faculty of intellectual ideas (reason) into motion".[139] Incidentally, this suggests that the bearers of poetic meaning are the images evoked by the words of a poem.

In addition to its pictorial aspects, poetry also has musical features. If only in a footnote, I have recalled Kant's claim that rhyme and rhythm make poetry (at least insofar as it is read aloud) similar

[135] Cf. KU § 49, AA 05: 317.

[136] I owe this expression (and the idea connected to it) to D. Davies, *Aesthetics and Literature*, Continuum, London 2007, pp. 162-163.

[137] On this see also Vidmar Jovanović, *Kant on Poetry and Cognition*, in "Journal of Aesthetic Education", 54, 1, 2020, pp. 1-17.

[138] KU § 51, AA 05: 321-322.

[139] KU § 49, AA 05: 315.

to music.[140] Thus, the art to which he attributes "the highest rank of all" and whose value does not lie in its perceptual properties alone may also offer the "enjoyment" of the art that, more than any other, "moves the mind in more manifold and, though only temporarily, in deeper ways".[141] On the one hand, this suggests that in the case of poetry, both the transitive use and the intransitive use of the term 'expression' play a role. Kant could therefore subscribe to Angela Leighton's claim that "a poem expresses something […] and at the same time […] is expressive, as if with musical dynamic".[142] On the other hand, it impinges on the nature of the thought process that poetry can prompt: rather than being one of logical connection, it may, to use Leighton's words, be "one of sound and syntax, rhythm and accent, of sense sparked by the collocation and connotation of words".[143]

Assuming that I have justified attributing the epistemic claim implied by aesthetic cognitivism to Kant, the vindication of the aesthetic claim follows immediately. In truth, Kant does not claim that the cognitive value of a work of art contributes to its artistic value, but his conception implies that the source of the cognitive value of a work, namely the aesthetic ideas it expresses, is also the source of its aesthetic value. As we have seen, Kant describes the mental disposition effected by aesthetic ideas in terms akin to those used to describe the state of mind on which taking pleasure in the beautiful rests, and he equates beauty with the expression of aesthetic ideas. The result is that a work strikes us as beautiful when it makes possible the wealth of thoughts and the animation of the cognitive faculties on which its potential cognitive benefits depend. In poetry, more than any other art, it becomes clear that what Kant considers the source of the pleasure offered by a work is a disposition of the mind that, while it perhaps does not push in the direction of what can be known, surely invites a kind of imaginative thought[144] that is not devoid of cognitive value, for it often engages in reflection on aspects of our experience and the use of our concepts.

[140] See n. 20. He also suggests that the "art of tone (*Tonkunst*)" may "very naturally be united with" poetry (KU § 53, AA 05: 328).

[141] KU § 53, AA 05: 328. That musicality contributes to the aesthetic value of poetry is claimed in Anth § 71, AA 07: 247.

[142] A. Leighton, 'Poetry's Knowing: So What Do We Know?', in J. Gibson (ed.), *The Philosophy of Poetry*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, pp. 162-182, p. 174.

[143] Ivi, p. 178.

[144] I have borrowed the expression 'imaginative thought' from E. John, 'Poetry and cognition', in J. Gibson, W. Huemer and L. Pocci (eds.), *A Sense of the World. Essays on fiction, narrative, and knowledge*, Routledge, New York and London 2007, pp. 219-232, p. 229.

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Kant's Concept of Genius: A Defence, Against Romanticism and Scepticism

di Andy Hamilton*

ABSTRACT
This article defends a Kantian conception of genius, as a middle way between the Romantic, and the Nietzschean sceptical conceptions. It begins by considering how the concept of genius has evolved, before addressing how Kant's account of genius helps resolve a tension within his aesthetics between aesthetic judgment as appreciation of purposiveness without a purpose, and recognition that the artwork is created purposefully. It considers the relation of genius to rule-following and the exemplary. It concludes with a defence of the concept of genius as well-defined, against contemporary critiques which see it as elitist, patriarchal, ethnocentric and mystificatory. In his discussion, I argue, Kant relates talent, skill and the exemplary in an elucidatory explanatory holism.

KEYWORDS
Genius, Kant, Romanticism, Art, Nietzsche

1. *A Changing Concept*

'Genius' is a contested concept, but the following analysis seems fairly anodyne. A genius is an exceptional person who manifests unusual creativity through natural ability and personal application. Application may be necessary to acquire the skills needed for genius to flourish, but the common stress is on native ability; as Bruno comments, the "greatness [of a genius] is not something that can be taught".[1] The genius, who is often charismatic, may be ahead of their time, and at odds with prevailing norms.

Beyond this anodyne characterisation, there is a range of views, from full-blown Romanticism, to scepticism about genius, whether ideologically-motivated or not. The latter account rejects Romanticism's mystical or religious connotations, or their residue in moderate accounts such as Kant's. It avoids the idea that the genius's

* Durham University (UK), a.j.hamilton@dur.ac.uk
[1] P. Bruno, *Kant's Concept of Genius*, Continuum, London 2010, p. 2.

talent is inexplicable or innate. Non-ideological scepticism probably originates with Nietzsche, and says that "genius" is simply a term of respect for a supreme and original talent. It need not deny that some people are so brilliant, that one is lost in admiration. It may also find a place for Kant's view that geniuses are a required object of study; this applies to philosophy, music, or chess – Kant, Bach, Mozart or Spassky. Ideological scepticism, in contrast, which now takes a postmodern form, regards the concept of genius as involving a mystificatory and superstitious expression of wonder, with connotations of elitism, patriarchy and Eurocentrism.

Romanticism is still flourishing, however. Henry Hardy is a Romantic about genius who finds the dictionary definition wanting:

> The OED defines a genius as "an exceptionally intelligent or talented person". In other words, genius is an ordinary ability possessed to an extraordinary degree. But this isn't right. A genius can do something quite different from ordinary mortals – different in kind, not just degree.[2]

In this, perhaps, Hardy is following Schopenhauer, whose highly Romantic account assumes that the genius works for posterity alone, their achievements rarely recognized by contemporaries:

> *Talent* is able to achieve what is beyond other people's capacity to achieve […] *genius* […] transcends not only others' capacity of achievement, but also their capacity of apprehension […] Talent is like the marksman who hits a target which others cannot reach; genius is like the marksman who hits a target, as far as which others cannot even see.[3]

Against scepticism and Romanticism, I will defend a Kantian middle way. I will argue that "genius" does have a definite sense, and refers to a genuine phenomenon. In the context of a variety of "genius myths", the account outlined in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (henceforth, *CrJ* – sections 46-49) is the most persuasive – or so I will argue.

As with other central concepts in the world of the arts, it is debated when the concept of genius appeared. Plato's concept of divine poetic inspiration in *Ion* is commonly recognised as an ancestor of the modern concept of genius. In the 18th century there was a transformation of the world of the arts, which included changes in the meaning of 'art' and 'aesthetic'. Peter Kivy argues

[2] H. Hardy, *In Search of Isaiah Berlin,* Tauris/Bloomsbury, London 2018, p. 3.
[3] A. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Dover, New York 1966, Vol II, p. 391.

that this involved a change in the concept of genius. The term originally referred to the essence of something, as in Adam Smith's "the genius of the British constitution", or *genius loci* – in Ancient Rome, the presiding deity of a place, later its essence or unique qualities. There may be a connection with *jinn* in Arabic.

Clearly there was a change in the meaning of the concept – or at least a change in the meaning of the word, as it appears in European languages.[4] (The distinction between word and object is clearly a difficult one.[5]) There is no doubt that Alexander the Great would have been described by contemporaries as a great general – but the idea of a military genius is a modern one. It is likely that the change in meaning, that Kivy refers to, began earlier in the modern era, however. Thus for Vasari, whose *Lives of the Artists* (1550) is the founding text of art history, artists of genius work with their minds before they work with their hands. Writing to his patron the Duke of Milan to explain a delay in the completion of the Last Supper, Leonardo commented that

> men of lofty genius [*gl'ingegni elevati*] sometimes accomplish the most when they work the least, seeking out inventions with the mind, and forming those perfect ideas which the hands afterwards express and reproduce from the images already conceived in the brain.[6]

It is disputed whether the concept applied in music before the 18th century – but this is a debate as much about the artistic status of music, as about the advent of the concept of genius. According to Kivy, Handel was the first composer regarded as a genius, in the manner of Michelangelo and artists in other media. But James Young demurs, citing Glarean's comment on Josquin (d. 1521) that "his genius is indescribable".[7] Richard Taruskin comments that Josquin was the first composer to interest his contemporaries and posterity as a personality:

> He was the subject of gossip and anecdote, and the picture that emerges [...] resembles the popular conception of Beethoven [...] cantankerous, arrogant, distracted [...] but excused by [...] his transcendent gift. Josquin, like Beethoven, was looked upon with awe as one marked [...] by divine inspiration – a status formerly reserved for prophets and saints.[8]

[4] See Bruno, *Kant's Concept of Genius*, cit., ch. 1.

[5] It is discussed in A. Hamilton, *Art and Entertainment: A Philosophical Enquiry*, Routledge, London, forthcoming 2022.

[6] G. Vasari, *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. G.d.C. de Vere, Knopf, New York 1996, vol. 1, p. 632.

[7] H. Glarean, *Dodecachordon*, trans. by Clement A. Miller, n.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1965, 2, p. 268.

[8] R. Taruskin, *Oxford History of Western Music*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2009, 1, p. 548.

However, I think that all writers agree that in the visual arts, genius was recognised at least as early as the 16th century.

Among philosophers, the concept of genius became prominent only in the 18th century – while Hume was a proponent, Reid was not. Kivy argues that during the 18th and 19th centuries, philosophers developed two concepts of genius – a Longinian conception of genius as a gift of nature, and propensity for breaking established rules, and a Platonic one of genius as divinely possessed. The dichotomy is unconvincing, however; Kant does not fit in either category, and Longinus is not a sufficiently major authority.

Historically, the concept of genius has in some ways become more specific, while in others it has broadened. As Robert Musil commented in the 1930s

> The time had come when people were starting to speak of genius on the soccer field or in the boxing ring, although there would still be at most only one genius of a halfback or one great tennis-court tactician for every ten or so explorers, tenors, or writers of genius who cropped up in the papers. The new spirit was not yet quite sure of itself.[9]

Even in a postmodern age, however, there are limits. A 'genius forger' is not both a genius and a forger – here the use of 'genius' is metaphorical, meaning 'excellent'.

In this article, I consider a continuum of concepts of genius, from the innate to the acquired:

(1) the Romantic or divine concept of innate or possessed
(2) Kant's combination of the innate and acquired.
(3) Nietzsche's sceptical concept of genius as hard work.

These concepts may be associated with alternative conceptions of the artwork, from Idealist to materialist – Idealists fail to recognise that art involves understanding the possibilities and limitations of the medium. But I have nothing further to say on that large question here.

An early precursor of the Romantic concept is Plato's *Ion*, which describes the inspired poet as having not skill, but divine dispensation. Schopenhauer – not Herder – offers the clearest expression of Romanticism, stressing "the free impulse of genius

[9] R. Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, trans. S. Wilkins and B. Pike, Picador, London 1997, p. 41. Quoted by Bruno, Kant's Concept of Genius, cit., p. 1.

without any admixture of deliberation and reflection".[10] At the other extreme is Nietzsche's naturalist scepticism about genius – popularly epitomised by Thomas Edison's remark that "Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration".[11] For Nietzsche, genius should be "understood without any mythological or religious nuance":[12]

> aside from […] suggestions of our vanity, the activity of the genius seems in no way fundamentally different from the activity of the inventor of machines, the scholar of astronomy or history, the master of tactics.
>
> All these activities are explicable if one pictures to oneself people whose thinking is active in one direction, who employ everything as material, who always zealously observe their own inner life and that of others […].
>
> […] Every activity of man is amazingly complicated, not only that of the genius: but none is a "miracle".[13]

His model is that of "the serious workman":

> Do not talk about giftedness, inborn talents! One can name great men of all kinds who were very little gifted. They *acquired* greatness, became 'geniuses' (as we put it) […] they all possessed that seriousness of the efficient workman which first learns to construct the parts properly before it ventures to fashion a great whole […][14]

Postmodern scepticism about genius could be regarded as a development of the Nietzschean view. Scepticism here means: the concept is not a genuine one, or has no instances. But Kant's middle way, I will argue, is the most convincing position.

2. *Overview of Kant's Account*

Kant's treatment of genius is the most profound in the philosophical literature. Among his key insights is that the genius-talent distinction relates to the exemplary nature of works of genius – thus at least implicitly, he understands the crucial role of artistic tradition, still neglected in the literature (discussed in section 4 below). However, it is notable that his discussion of genius was added to *CrJ* at a late stage; surprisingly, given its importance in the aesthetics of the time, earlier drafts do not refer to genius. As Cooper comments, until its final drafts in 1789, Kant rejected

[10] Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, cit., p. 409.
[11] Spoken statement (c. 1903), published in *Harper's Monthly (September 1932).*
[12] F. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, Penguin, Harmondsworth Middlesex 1994, s. 5, paragraph 231.
[13] Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, *ibid.*
[14] Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, *ibid.*

the conception of genius as spontaneous creativity, advocated by Edward Young, Baumgarten, Herder, Mendelssohn and Hume.[15] In a letter to his student Herder in 1768, Kant warned against its excesses.[16] In some mid-1780s letters, Kant is sceptical of the concept of genius in German-speaking philosophy, while the preface to the second edition of *Critique of Pure Reason* criticises the German obsession with genius.[17] By 1788, Herder had become a leader of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, and advocated a Romantic conception of genius that neglects perspiration in favour of inspiration. In *CrJ,* Kant wanted to provide a purely transcendental account of taste against his speculative systems. Indeed, for John Zammito, "The Third *Critique* is almost a continuous attack on Herder".[18] But in the later drafts of late summer 1789 to early 1790, Kant explored genius as exemplary use of the productive imagination, and expression of freedom.

As Henry Allison explains, Kant's account of genius is meant to help resolve a tension within his aesthetics between aesthetic judgment as appreciation of purposiveness without a purpose, and recognition that the artwork is created purposefully.[19] For Jeremy Proulx, this is the commonest modern interpretation of Kant's theory of genius:

> a solution to the problem of fine art – the problem that while pure judgments of taste rest on the appreciation of the mere form of purposiveness, art involves intention and thus an actual purpose, not just purposiveness itself.[20]

Kant begins by declaring that

> *Genius* is the talent (natural endowment) that gives the rule to art. Since talent is an innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature, we could also put it this way: *Genius* is the innate mental predisposition *through which* nature gives the rule to art.

Genius, then, is an innate ability, and it is in this sense that artworks are rule-governed. Kant regards the artistic genius as a

[15] A. Cooper, *The Tragedy of Philosophy: Kant's Critique of Judgment and the Project of Aesthetics*, SUNY Press, New York 2017, passim.

[16] I. Kant, *Correspondence*, ed. by A. Zweig, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 94.

[17] *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1787, Bxliii.

[18] J. Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's 'Critique of Judgment'*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992, p. 10.

[19] H. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, p. 272.

[20] J. Proulx, *Nature, Judgment and Art: Kant and the Problem of Genius*, in "Kant Studies Online", 2011, pp. 27-53, p. 30.

"favourite of nature" – "*ein Günstling der Natur*" – gifted to make objects of great complexity and unified structure. The rules which inform these objects are the product of nature, and not the object of conscious attention.

Kant assumes that the genius is solitary, which is a feature of the Romantic conception. But his treatment is an otherwise moderate one, incorporating discipline and skill, and rejecting Herder's *Sturm und Drang* proto-Romanticism.[21] Genius is "nature working through the subject" rather than the "subject in their self-possession". Kant insists that "fine arts must necessarily be considered arts of *genius*": "Beautiful art is the art of a genius" who ignores "classical rules", and pursues an exemplary originality.[22] The genius is a rule-giver, but not a rule-follower. It is important to stress that Kant does not think that all the products of fine art are products of genius. His view is that necessarily, some of them are – a form of argument that is too often neglected. A similar argument would be that not all artworks must be products of craft, and could be readymades or conceptual works; but necessarily, some of them must be products of craft, and so there could not be an artworld consisting entirely of conceptual art or readymades. It is apparent that Kant allows that talents as well as geniuses produce fine art, in such quotations as: "But since a genius is nature's favourite and so […] a rare phenomenon, his example gives rise to a school for other good minds".[23]

For Kant, "Every art presupposes rules […]" – it is intentional, not random. "On the other hand, the concept of fine art does not permit a judgment about the beauty of its product to be derived from any rule whatsoever that has a *concept* as its determining basis […]" Free beauty is not based on a determinate concept, for which criteria of application can be specified. (Contrast, for example, the determinate concept "chair" – its criteria specify something for sitting on, with legs, a certain height, and so on.) "Hence fine art cannot itself devise the rule by which it is to bring about its product […] [So] it must be nature in the subject (and through the attunement of his powers) that gives the rule to art; in other words, fine art is possible only as the product of genius".[24]

The artist operates in the domain of nature, and freedom, yet

[21] See Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's 'Critique of Judgment'*, cit., pp. 137-142. Kant also rejects the Platonic notion of genius as 'inspiration'.
[22] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 46.
[23] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 49.
[24] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 46.

this freedom is not unfettered or chaotic. Artists "make sensible rational ideas […] beyond the limits of experience", not by reason, but by the poetic thought characteristic of genius.[25] Kant outlines the following argument:

(1) Genius is a *talent* for producing something for which no determinate rule can be given [...] hence the foremost property of genius must be *originality.*
(2) Since nonsense too can be original, the products of genius must also be models, i.e., they must be *exemplary.*
(3) Genius itself cannot describe or indicate scientifically how it brings about its products, and it is rather *nature* [through the talent of the artist] that gives the rule to art.
(4) Nature, through genius, prescribes the rule not to science but to art.[26]

This argument rests on distinctive Kantian themes, including the aforementioned idea that attributions of beauty do not rest on determinate criteria – they have no "determining basis". There is also the Kantian assumption that natural beauty is superior to artificial or artistic beauty. Kant expands on claim (2), that products of genius are exemplary: "the other genius, who follows the example, is aroused to it by a feeling of his own originality", and does not simply imitate – an issue pursued in section 4 below. However, "for other clever minds his example gives rise to a school, that is to say a methodical instruction according to rules"[27]; imitators produce derivative works. Geniuses do not themselves make up rules for others to follow. Rather, they create a body of works from which others can extract a set of rules – as Aristotle did for drama in the *Poetics*, and as European music theorists did in creating the concept of sonata form in the 19th century.

Kant deflates the problem when he says that genius lies in the nature of the artist. For him, genius lies in some ineffable rule of nature, nature here being unfathomable and impossible to explain – the origin of aesthetic rules lies beyond reach. This is a *characterisation*, not an explanation of genius.

One of several controversial claims by Kant is that the genius-artist must not know what they are doing, in the sense that it is not prescribed by a rule – they cannot explain their own achievement, nor teach it to others. They must, however, know what they are doing in the sense of avoiding arbitrariness. As Zammito puts it, "From the vantage

[25] *Critique of Judgement*, ss. 5, 314.
[26] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 46.
[27] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 49.

point of rationality, [the genius] is impotent".[28] According to Zammito, the only way to reconcile art as free, yet limited by mechanism – as natural and also purposive – is to treat artistic creativity not in terms of "the subject in his self-possession, but rather as nature working through the subject".[29] Ironically, genius was understood by Kant "as something which the artist neither controlled nor understood":

> genius had to be taken to be "original", as the conventional wisdom had it, and […] could produce only "exemplary" instantiations which could neither be prescribed in logical rules nor described in discursive empirical canons, but which stood [...] the one source not only for the cultivation of taste as appreciation but for further exemplification of beauty through art.[30]

What Michael Haworth calls "a constitutive ignorance" in the genius is not something that Kant regards positively:

> Despite such extravagant language as "nature's favourites", the genius is not simply venerated or elevated in Kant's account, for he is simultaneously humbled by being placed under the influence of something that he no more understands or controls than the non-artist does.[31]

As Haworth argues, art both requires rules and conventions, and requires their constant suspension and transformation. The genius cannot work to a rule, otherwise there is no originality – yet they cannot work without rules, otherwise they will produce nonsense.

There seems to be a confusion here, both by Kant, and contemporary followers such as Derrida. Artists vary in how knowledgeable they are concerning their creative processes. For instance, in contemporary Western art music, many composers are academics who are rigorous in their musical self-analysis – Brian Ferneyhough is a good example. He is certainly a talent, and the test of time is needed before we can pronounce him a genius – but it will not be his self-analysis that prevents him from being one. Contrast the geniuses of jazz who have been inarticulate – for every articulate Miles Davis or Dave Brubeck, there is a Bud Powell or Thelonious Monk, generally unwilling or unable to discuss their music. Obviously there are issues here about *who* they were unwilling to talk to, but the general point is clear – many geniuses conform to Kant's model, and lack insight, but many do not.

[28] Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's 'Critique of Judgment'*, cit., p. 140.
[29] Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's 'Critique of Judgment*, cit., p. 139.
[30] Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's 'Critique of Judgment'*, cit., p. 139.
[31] M. Haworth, *Genius Is What Happens: Derrida and Kant on Genius, Rule-Following and the Event*, in "British Journal of Aesthetics", 54, 3, 2014, p. 333.

The question of insight into genius has a bearing on Kant's rejection of scientific genius, discussed in section 4. But first we consider taste, which may be a more self-conscious capacity than genius – the question of understanding of one's genius, and the relation of taste and genius, are connected.

3. *Kant vs. Sturm und Drang – Genius vs. Taste*

Commentators such as Adorno regard Kant as offering a 'taste' aesthetic. They therefore assume a traditional formalist picture of Kant, that neglects the *Critique of Judgment* beyond the Four Moments. However, it must be agreed that Kant advocates such an aesthetic to the extent of holding that 'taste' must "clip the wings" of genius. It is widely agreed that in doing this, Kant was reacting against the *Sturm und Drang* movement, which aimed to free art from the constraints of classical rules (Greek, Latin and French) by untrammelled pursuit of genius, evoking intense emotional responses in audiences. *Sturm und Drang* contrasted taste, which it regarded as derivative and pedantic, with the work of the genius, unconstrained by rules and taste. In Herder's Platonic account of the origin of genius, God is solely responsible. In contrast, Gadamer comments, Kant was "old-fashioned and […] maintained the concept of taste which the *Sturm und Drang* not only violently dismissed but also violently demolished".[32] However, it is wrong to say that Herder rejected the role of taste. He writes that "*genius* is generally a *mass* of [...] striving faculties of the soul; *taste* is *order* in this mass [...] in themselves taste and genius are never opposed":

> Genius is an aggregation of natural forces; it therefore [...] precedes the formation of taste [...] taste can arise only through geniuses – that is, through natural powers that operate quickly and vivaciously […] taste without genius is an absurdity.[33]

My present concern is with Kant rather than *Sturm und Drang*, however.

Kant writes that

> insofar as art shows genius it does indeed deserve to be called *inspired* [*geistreich*], but it deserves to be called *fine* art only insofar as it shows taste.

[32] H. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. by J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall, Continuum, London 2004. p. 50.

[33] J.G. Herder, *The Causes of the Decay of Taste*, in his "Selected Writings on Aesthetics", Princeton University Press, Princeton 2006, pp. 309-310.

Taste, like the power of judgment in general, consists in disciplining (or training) genius. It severely clips its wings, and makes it civilized […]but at the same time it gives it guidance as to how far and over what it may spread while still remaining purposive. It introduces clarity and order into a wealth of thought […] if there is a conflict between these two properties in a product, and something has to be sacrificed, then it should rather be on the side of genius.[34]

He continues that

since originality of talent is one essential component [of] genius, shallow minds believe that the best way to show that they are geniuses in first bloom is by renouncing all rules of academic constraint, believing that they will cut a better figure on the back of an ill-tempered than of a training-horse. [35]

Thus the descriptions of Beethoven as a rule breaker, that became common late in Kant's lifetime, are reminiscent of Herder rather than Kant.

Zammito stresses that Kant does not subscribe to a cult of genius:

Romanticism is often taken […] as [a] rebellion against the primacy of theoretical reason and of science […] the effort to replace the natural scientist or natural philosopher [...] with the artist as the true seer […] As a good son of the Enlightenment, Kant found such notions revolting. Science should not endure such indignity. "Genius" had to be put in its place.[36]

The *Sturm und Drang* concept of genius is incoherent, Kant insists. Skill, discipline and technique are required, in addition to originality – though Zammito holds that Kant has an ironic intention in his account of genius.

Kant holds that beauty in art is the result of taste, which gives it form.

To give this form, however, to the product of fine art, taste merely is required. By this the artist, having practiced and corrected his taste by a variety of examples from nature or art, controls his work and, after […] often laborious, attempts to satisfy taste, finds the form […] Hence this form is not […] a matter of inspiration, or of a free swing of the mental powers, but rather of a slow […] process of improvement, directed to making the form adequate to his thought without prejudice to the freedom in the play of those powers.[37]

For Zammito, Kant then fears he has undermined his approach to genius, so takes back what he has ascribed to taste:

[34] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 50.
[35] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 47.
[36] Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's 'Critique of Judgment'*, cit., 1992, pp. 138-139.
[37] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 48.

> Taste is, however, merely a critical, not a productive faculty; and what conforms to it is not, merely on that account, a work of fine art. It may belong to useful and mechanical art, or even to science, as a product following definite rules. [38]

Kant is unclear whether genius provides the material, or also the life and spirit of art. His considered view in s. 50 is that taste in isolation can produce only mechanical, lifeless art, while taking genius in isolation risks producing nonsense.

It is the Romantic conception that separates genius and taste, therefore – a more moderate account such as Kant's does not need to do this. As Proulx rightly comments, "the separation between genius and taste is strictly analytic, and […] Kant's most complete account embraces both in a seamless whole".[39] One underlying issue is what I will call the *naïve innateness condition.* The classic model of the genius views their ability as innate, as illustrated in popular accounts of Mozart as having no need for craft – music just poured out of him. However, Beethoven had sketchbooks, while the greatest Renaissance artists made *pentimenti* – it is the copyist who does not. The Romantic model has a naïve view of what "innate" means. The issue of innateness is largely spurious – the answer in "nature v. nurture" disputes is usually that each is required. If one views Kant as regarding genius and taste as inseparable, he can escape that naïve view.

4. *Talent v. Genius: Imitation and the Exemplary*

Kant anticipates Adorno and Horkheimer in treating science as unthinking calculative reason, though he does not condemn it as they do. For Kant, a great scientist is a great calculating machine – though for him, this is not a pejorative description:

> the scientists' talent lies in continuing to increase the perfection of our cognitions and of all the benefits that depend on [these], as well as in imparting that same knowledge to others; and in these respects they are far superior to those who merit the honour of being called geniuses.[40]

Kant declares that "No disparagement […] of those great men [of science], to whom the human race is so deeply indebted is involved in this comparison [with artist-geniuses]". He means it

[38] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 48.
[39] Proulx, *Nature, Judgment and Art: Kant and the Problem of Genius*, cit., p. 29.
[40] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 47.

– but it is nonetheless an unsettling comment. It shows that in Kant's account, the concept of genius had not in all respects fully evolved – for in our contemporary concept, scientific genius is fully the equal of artistic.

In regard to science, indeed, Kant is mistaken. As Haworth comments, Kant does not apply the same criteria in each case.[41] The student of Newton, we are told, could learn "everything that [Newton] has set forth" in his great work, but "one cannot learn to write inspired poetry however elaborate all the precepts of this art may be, and however superb its models".[42] But Kant asks the would-be scientist merely to *learn* or *understand* scientific knowledge, while asking the would-be artist to *create* art. Clearly, the ability to understand Newton is not the same as an ability to produce something of similar magnitude. Newton may have been no better able to explain how he discovered gravity, than Van Gogh could explain how he painted his sunflowers. Moreover, while much scientific work is calculation, so is much of the work of the artist of genius. It might be argued that Einstein was creative in his discoveries, but not in terms of bringing something into existence – science discovers and does not invent. But even scientific realists must allow that Einstein brought the theory of relativity into being.

The notion of a 'school' is different in science and art, while imitation takes a different form. In that sense Kant is right to contrast them, even if the terms of his contrast are mistaken, and he is wrong to deny scientific genius. Philosophy occupies a middle way between the arts and the sciences. There was a school of Cartesians, and a school of German rationalists; the Lvov-Warsaw School of Polish philosophy flourished between WW1 and WW2.

Although Kant locates the disanalogy between art and science incorrectly, he is more insightful on the nature of imitation in relation to artistic schools. He writes that

> the product of a genius […] is an example that is meant not to be imitated, but to be followed by another genius […] [who] […] is aroused […] to a feeling of his own originality, which allows him to exercise in art his freedom from the constraint of rules, [so] that art itself acquires a new rule by this, thus showing that the talent is exemplary. But since a genius is nature's favourite and so […] a rare phenomenon,

[41] Haworth, *Genius Is What Happens*, cit., passim.
[42] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 47.

his example gives rise to a school for other good minds, i.e., a methodical instruction by means of whatever rules could be extracted from those products of spirit […] fine art is to that extent imitation, for which nature, through a genius, gave the rule.[43]

From Kant's account we can see that although talent and genius are contrasting notions, they inhabit the same artistic system. Artistic schools follow rules derived from the study of Old Masters, but genius still flourishes within those constraints. Genius draws on tradition. Bach's contrapuntal style was an ingenious development of Buxtehude's Germanic polyphony. Monet in the 1860s was the ingenious epitome of the Barbizon school, of which he was then only a follower; Proust's greatest work arose from Balzac and Zola's construction of epic textual composites. But unlike the talent, the genius does not seek to follow rules from a school. One must distinguish "influenced by" and "follows". There are different kinds of imitation, with varying degrees of understanding of what is being imitated; similarly, different kinds of influences.

A genius can belong to, or initiate, an artistic tradition. But to reiterate, the concept of an *artistic tradition* has been underexplored in the philosophical literature. Here are some necessary distinctions. Artistic traditions can be divided into sclerotic or coercive, and living traditions; only the latter opens itself to criticism. There is unthinking and thinking acceptance of tradition – unself-conscious, non-rational tradition on Max Weber's model, and self-conscious, rationalistic tradition that Alisdair MacIntyre stresses. When jazz musicians refer to working "in the tradition", for instance, they are not ceasing to reflect – rather, they are consciously reflecting on and drawing from the artistic achievement of their precursors.

Unself-conscious, non-rational tradition on Weber's model, largely follows David Armstrong's non-rational analysis of tradition; the concept of a self-conscious, rationalistic tradition that MacIntyre stresses departs from it in important respects.[44] There is a *non-rational component in intellectual or artistic tradition* – membership of the tradition is accepted traditionally. Thus for a jazz musician in the tradition of John Coltrane, a painter in the tradition of Abstract Expressionism, or a philosopher in the tradition of Wittgenstein, one simply accepts the approach in question, or abandons it in favour of another tradition, without reason. When MacIntyre writes

[43] *Critique of Judgement*, s. 49.

[44] D. Armstrong, 'The Nature of Tradition', in O. Harries (ed.), *Liberty and Politics: Studies in Social Theory*, Pergamon, Rushcutters Bay (NSW) 1976; A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, University of Notre-Dame Press, Notre-Dame (IN) 1988.

about what is "part of the nature of traditions", he means "part of the nature of intellectual traditions".[45] There has to be a commitment in this sense to a philosophical, religious, artistic or political world-view – it cannot be entirely a rational matter, but is part of one's self-identity.

Intellectual and artistic traditions do not evolve entirely by osmosis, however. An artist may want self-consciously to develop the tradition in a certain direction. Armstrong comments that

> a tradition cannot be adopted nor does it spread. It is handed on […] although the result is that the successors in the tradition imitate their predecessors, their predecessors and/or the social group generally are not simply passive but in some way encourage this imitation.[46]

However, it is not simply by encouraging imitation that the artistic group or tradition is active; it may also encourage criticism. An artist or thinker who sees themselves as within a tradition may nonetheless be critical of how that tradition is evolving. This would be an example of MacIntyre's rationality of tradition, and it allows for the possibility that the genius may have rational understanding of their place in a tradition.

There is unclarity in the literature, concerning how the genius rejects rules. The genius does not follow rules. By this I mean both that they break them, and that they cannot – as Kant argues – explain their own genius. But any skilled practitioner has to internalise rules, as they develop their skills over hours of learning; in lawn tennis or in jazz improvisation, one absorbs the rules in order to play without thinking about them, intuitively. Thus there are interesting parallels between genius, and discussions of expertise such as by Dreyfus.[47] However, the skilled practitioner who internalises the rules is – generally – a talent rather than a genius. Much further work is needed to elucidate the multiple distinctions.

There is an important sense in which genius obscures, or makes us forget, the skill involved in producing its works. Wittgenstein, in notes from 1940-1943, begins with the comment "One might say: 'Genius is talent exercised with courage'".[48] He continues:

[45] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, cit., p. 327.
[46] D. Armstrong, 'The Nature of Tradition', cit., p. 17.
[47] See H. Dreyfus, *Overcoming the Myth of the Mental: How Philosophers Can Profit from the Phenomenology of Everyday Expertise*, in "Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association", 79, 2, 2005, pp. 47-65.
[48] L. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. by G.H. von Wright and H. Nyman, trans.

Genius is what makes us forget the master's talent.
Genius is what makes us forget skill.
Where genius wears thin, skill may show through […][49]

He also states that "Genius is talent in which character makes itself heard […] Kraus has talent, an extraordinary talent, but not genius".[50] Wittgenstein's comments are close to the proverbial "*Ars est celare artem*" – literally "It is (true) art to conceal art", commonly rendered as "the art that conceals art", a remark traditionally but doubtfully attributed to Ovid. (See http://atrium-media.com/goldenthreads/arsestcelare.html.) In the sentence "Ars est celare artem", the two occurrences of "ars" are ambiguous: fine art consists in concealing artistic technique or skill. But it might be thought that in order to create art that conceals art, the genius must have that insight into their own creativity that Kant denies. It is not clear that this is the case, however. The doing of the genius may be hidden to them, so that art is "concealed" without the genius recognising it.

Finally, an important connection with the issue of the test of time should be noted. Arguably, calling something a "contemporary classic" amounts to a prediction that it will pass the test of time. In the case of exceptional genius, however, it seems that the test of time is not necessary. Beethoven was exemplary, and popular, in his own lifetime, and has remained so uninterruptedly ever since – and is constantly re-interpreted. Likewise, it would be astonishing if Picasso did not remain in the canon.

5. *Art Without Genius*

Finally I turn to scepticism about genius. One must distinguish scepticism concerning a Romantic conception of genius – including Kant's scepticism – from a deeper scepticism about any concept of genius. This is the view that may be labelled "art without genius", and it takes two forms, one of which is *philistinism*, I would argue. "Art without genius" means

(1) Austere classicism with no place for originality.

by P. Winch, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1980, pp. 38 and 38 (English edition).

[49] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, cit., pp. 43 and 43 (English edition).

[50] MS 136 59a, 4.1.1948, quoted in F. *Özlem, Wittgenstein on Art and Creative Imagination: "How to Understand 'Genius' as Courage in Talent and Character Manifested Through Talent"*, in "From the ALWS archives: A selection of papers from the international Wittgenstein symposia", http://wittgensteinrepository.org/ojs/index.php/agora-alws/article/view/2850/3424.

(2) Democratic or (I would say) populist art with no place for talent or originality.

(3) Non-populist concepts that nonetheless treat "genius" as a metaphor for "exceptionally talented".

Classicism is sceptical of genius; perhaps it does not approve of upturning the rules. But I do not think that classicists must deny genius – at least, the form that classicism now takes is not inimical to genius. So I cannot conceive of contemporary advocates of (1), but there are many of (2).

Contemporary populists, who adopt position (2), reject the idea of genius as such. This position is *philistine* and has a strong political dimension.[51] For instance, Kevin Ashton calls "the genius myth" a "divisive classification", and rejects the "creativity myth" – that creative brilliance is the domain of a few gifted people. He argues that the modern concept of genius implies exceptional hereditary general intelligence, that can be measured and used to predict future greatness.[52] We examine the objections in turn:

(a) *Ethnocentric*

Ashton comments that the term "genius" was intended only for white men of European descent. Against this view, one should argue that canons may have neglected non-Europeans, but the neglect is being rectified. It may well be that Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday were not widely referred to as 'geniuses' till the 1940s or 50s, because the term was intended for white men – though I would be surprised if there were no descriptions of Armstrong and Ellington as geniuses during the 1930s. But as racism was increasingly recognised as such, the term 'genius' was more often used to refer to non-European, as well as to female musicians and artists. African-American jazz musicians are recognised as geniuses, while South Asian classical music celebrates the genius of virtuoso musicians and composers; Western canons recognise figures such as Ravi Shankar and Hokusai. "Genius" is not an essentially racist concept.

[51] See A. Hamilton, *Art and Entertainment: A Philosophical Enquiry*, Routledge, London, forthcoming 2022.

[52] K. Ashton, *How to Fly a Horse: The Secret History of Creation, Invention, and Discovery*, Doubleday, London 2015, passim.

(b) *Patriarchal*

Linda Nochlin offered a feminist critique of genius which avoids what she calls "the feminist's first reaction […] to answer the question [Why are there no great women artists?] as it is put" – by arguing that Berthe Morisot was not dependent on Manet, and that Artemisia Gentileschi was a great artist. On her view, "The problem lies not so much with the feminists' concept of what femininity is, but rather with their misconception – shared with the public at large – of what art is". One must look at the socio-economic context, and will discover that the arts are "stultifying, oppressive and discouraging to all those, women among them, who did not have the good fortune to be born white, preferably middle-class and, above all, male". Women were not permitted to participate in traditionally male areas of artistic activity such as life rooms; women artists or writers tended to gain success by assuming a male identity. While women were home-makers, their genius husbands produced artworks – it is no coincidence that Jane Austen was unmarried.[53]

Nochlin's critique has been influential, as illustrated by reports that Cambridge University examiners are told to avoid using words like "flair", "brilliance" and "genius" when assessing students' work. According to lecturer Lucy Delap, History tutors are discouraged from using these terms because genius in particular has an "intellectual history [...] associated with qualities culturally assumed to be male".[54] A study in *Science* found that fields where the concept of genius is popular, like maths, have fewer women than those which emphasise hard work.[55] It remains true, up to the present, that people struggle to attribute the qualities associated with genius to women, because of how women are viewed. But Kivy rightly responds that

> It is not […] the traditional concept of genius that has historically excluded the female genius, but rather the insidious […] characterizations of women that prevent them from falling under that concept.[56]

[53] L. Nochlin, 'Why have there been no great women artists?', in A. Jones (ed.), *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, Routledge, London 2003.
www.artnews.com/art-news/retrospective/why-have-there-been-no-great-women-artists-4201/

[54] www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/06/12/cambridge-university-examiners-told-avoid-using-words-like-flair/.

[55] E. Lamb, *The Media and the Genius Myth*, in "Scientific American", February 5, 2015, https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/roots-of-unity/the-media-and-the-genius-myth/
See also C. Battersby, *Gender and Genius*, University of Indiana Press, Bloomington 1989.

[56] P. Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and the Idea of Musical Genius*, Yale University Press, Yale 2001, p. 237.

That is, rather than reject the concept of genius as male, one should recognise that it can have female as well as male representatives – and indeed, in the visual arts from the 20th century onwards, figures such as Barbara Hepworth and Bridget Riley are unsurpassed.

(c) *Elitist*

Elitism in a possibly acceptable sense says that some people are better judges, in art, morals or politics. Elitism in a pejorative sense is an anti-meritocratic standpoint that perpetuates an elite group – such as white, privately-educated, Protestant males from wealthy suburbs. This is exclusion. Talent must be viewed as potential, not just achievement. A classic example is the recruitment policy for the officer class of the British Royal Navy during the 19th century. In the period 1818-1902, just four officers were commissioned from the ranks.[57] That is, a talent pool of experienced seafarers was almost entirely ignored, in favour of those – talented or not – who were wealthy enough to afford the considerable outlay needed to become a naval officer. This is a "self-perpetuating" class indeed.

This objection is the weakest, because in some sense, the production of higher quality art is inherently the work of the gifted.[58] Indeed, as Nietzsche writes, genius may be explicitly anti-elitist.

Cult of genius out of vanity – Because we think well of ourselves, but nonetheless never suppose ourselves capable of producing a painting like one of Raphael's or a dramatic scene like one of Shakespeare's, we convince ourselves that the capacity to do so is quite extraordinarily marvellous, a wholly uncommon accident, or, if we are still religiously inclined, a mercy from on high.

Thus our vanity, our self-love, promotes the cult of the genius: for only if we think of him as being very remote from us, as a *miraculum*, does he not aggrieve us […][59]

Nietzsche was certainly an elitist, but he argues correctly that genius is not an essentially elitist concept. He believes that the supernatural model of genius arises from vanity:

Thus our vanity furthers the worship of the genius, for it does not hurt only if we think of it as very remote from ourselves, as a miracle [...] men speak of genius only where they find the effects of the great intellect most agreeable and [...] where

[57] Admiral Lord West, in "Britain at Sea", BBC Radio 4, www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b045c66j.

[58] See A. Hamilton, *Scruton on Culture*, in "British Journal of Aesthetics", 49, 4, 2009, pp. 389-404.

[59] Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, s. 4, paragraph 162.

they do not want to compete. To call someone "divine" means "Here we do not have to compete".[60]

He continues:

> Artists have an interest in others' believing in sudden ideas, so-called inspirations […] In truth, the good artist's or thinker's imagination is continuously producing things good, mediocre, and bad, but his *power of judgment*, highly sharpened and practiced, rejects, selects, joins together […] Beethoven's notebooks [show] that he gradually assembled the most glorious melodies and, to a degree, selected them out of disparate beginnings. The artist who separates less rigorously […] can […] become a great improviser; but artistic improvisation stands low in relation to artistic thoughts earnestly and laboriously chosen.[61]

Unlike Kant he believes that there are scientists of genius, such as Kepler.

Great artists are talented, and talent is not equally distributed. Some people have a lot of talent in a certain direction, and it is not elitist to say this. "Picasso is a more talented artist than I am, or could ever have been", is obviously true, and hardly elitist. To reject the idea of genius, and hold that "Everyone is equally talented, we reject the idea of genius" – that is philistine, and it implies that there is no such thing as good as opposed to bad art.

(d) *Mystificatory*

For Berger, the concept of genius places the work of an artist beyond understanding, as though the social and historical context of the work were irrelevant, swept aside by "mystification".[62] As Nochlin comments, "Genius [...] is thought of as [a] mysterious power [embedded in] the Great Artist". She calls it a "magical aura", a "semi-religious conception of the artist's role […] apparently miraculous […]and a-social". However, she argues, "no serious contemporary art historian takes such obvious fairy tales at their face value".[63]

There are two responses to this misconception. First, wonder is not inconsistent with socio-economic explanation. As Kivy rightly comments, if the 'myths' of genius – or rather, the concepts of genius – were rationalised or explained away, the result

[60] Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, cit. s. 4, paragraph 162.
[61] Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, cit. s. 4, paragraph 155.
[62] J. Berger, *Ways of Seeing, Penguin*, London 1972, pp. 15-16.
[63] Nochlin, 'Why have there been no great women artists?', cit.

would no more leave untouched the wonder we now experience over the mystery of artistic creation [...] at the highest level, than could the discovery that comets are 'merely' dirty ice leave untouched the wonder and awe our ancestors experienced in contemplating [them].[64]

There is something inexplicable in Art Tatum's genius, though one can analyse how he was influenced by stride pianists such as Fats Waller – another genius – and the otherwise obscure cocktail pianist Lee Sims. Why not be amazed? It would be a sad existence, that denied that amazing things happen. The second response is that, as we have seen, ascriptions of genius have a more complex structure than mere expressions of wonder – Kant relates talent, skill and the exemplary is an elucidatory explanatory holism. His distinction between the way in which talent and genius imitate, helps to show that to ascribe genius is not simply to express wonder at a phenomenon.

Finally we come to position (3): Non-populist concepts that nonetheless treat 'genius' as a metaphor for 'exceptionally talented'. An example would be biographer Duncan Heining's discussion of jazz composer George Russell.[65] When I asked him, by email, whether Russell was a genius, he responded, "Would you settle for 'Highly talented with a distinctive vision of jazz'? I emphasise collaboration over individual agency alone". That is a persuasive objection to Romantic conceptions of genius. But the description does not do justice to Russell's creation of some of the greatest jazz of the 1950s and 60s. That makes him a genius, I would argue, in some sense more than "exceptionally talented". Indeed, he founded a school of followers.

6. *Conclusion*

Many attacks on genius, including the preceding, are I think attacks on a Romantic conception. This includes the concern about genius that arises from what Harold Bloom called 'the anxiety of influence'. The 19th century 'Beethoven myth', the celebration of his genius, was an example of *Kunstreligion* and the sacralisation of art. The resulting anxiety of influence was perhaps to the detriment of Western art music, in that Brahms and others were reluctant to attempt forms that expressed Beethoven's dominance, notably the

[64] Kivy, *The Possessor and the Possessed*, cit., p. 253.
[65] D. Heining, *Stratusphunk: The Life and Works of George Russell*, Jazz Internationale, Self-published 2021.

symphony. But that is a problem concerning the response to genius, rather than a kind of scepticism about genius.[66]

Sceptics fail to recognise that there is no single 'genius myth', and no single concept of genius. To reiterate, in 'nature v. nurture' disputes, usually that each is required. Not every genius is a *Wunderkind*; for every Mozart there is a Beethoven or Brahms who worked hard, producing many drafts of material. There are genius late developers, sometimes very late. If Kant – or Janacek, or Michael Tippett to take three extreme cases – had died at the age of fifty, they would largely be forgotten. Likewise, solitariness is not essential.

The genius, whether in philosophy, art or science, may not belong under the heading of some existing 'ism' or other – though they often generate their own 'ism', to which followers subscribe. Unlike lesser thinkers, for instance, someone of Wittgenstein's originality cannot simply be subsumed under either naturalism or Kantianism. A genius can create a style-category; Hume may be a naturalist, but that is a position that he largely created himself. However, it is true that Hume belonged to a tradition of scepticism. Genius is in some sense inexplicable, but it belongs within a context of artistic practice and tradition which is fully subject to interpretation.

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[66] On the Beethoven myth, see M. Barnes, "The People's Beethoven: The Reception of Beethoven in the United States before the American Civil War", in preparation.

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Hölderlin as Reader of Poetry: Notes on the "Wechsel der Töne"[*]

di Elisa Ronzheimer[**]

ABSTRACT
Hölderlin's fragmentary and enigmatic remarks on the 'Variation of Tones' in poetry ('Wechsel der Töne') which outline a systematic genre poetics have often been understood as the underlying principle that informed his own poetic production. This paper proposes to conceive of the 'Variation of Tones' not as a comprehensive poetics at the basis of Hölderlin's oeuvre but instead as an instance of his practice of reading. With its particular attention to moments of transition between genres within the poetic text, the 'Variation of Tones' emerges as a tool for reading literature defined by genre hybridity. At the same time, it sheds light on Hölderlin's relational conception of genre poetics which recasts literary genre as a temporary constellation of 'generic tones'.

KEYWORDS
Friedrich Hölderlin, Variation of Tones, Genre Poetics, Genre Hybridity, Reading Practices

Hölderlin's call for a modern mechanics of poetry has puzzled his readers to this day. In his introduction to the "Remarks on Oedipus", published in 1804, Hölderlin urged his fellow poets to "elevate poetry today to the *mechane* of the ancients",[1] "in order to secure for today's poets a civil existence"[2] – a stipulation which was formulated in stark opposition to the prevalent aesthetics of genius and self-expression which had been established by the early 1800s.[3] The literary scholar Peter Szondi has minutely reconstructed Hölderlin's particular position within the

[*] I would like to thank Susan Morrow for her help with the English language revisions and I would like to express my gratitude to the anonymous reviewer for their very valuable suggestions.

[**] Universität Bielefeld (DE), elisa.ronzheimer@uni-bielefeld.de

[1] F. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, trans. T. Pfau, State University of New York Press, Albany (NY) 1988, p. 101.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Cf. R. Nägele, '1808 – Poetic Revolution', in D.E. Wellbery *et al.* (eds.), *A New History of German Literature*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA)/London 2004, pp. 511-516.

then contemporary transformation of a normative poetics into a speculative one, which occurred throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.[4] In his so-called 'Theory of the Variation of Tones' ('Lehre vom Wechsel der Töne'), Hölderlin recast traditional genre poetics by arranging the genres of lyric, epic, and tragic poetry – or rather: their respective 'tones' – in a number of coordinated sequences, thus deducing the genres from specific tone formations.

Hölderlin's fragmentary sketches of the 'Variation of Tones' have often been understood as one instance of his mechanics of poetry and of the "lawful calculation"[5] at the basis of his own poetic production.[6] As such, the tone sequences have been recognised as the principle informing Hölderlin's lyric poetry from the mid-1790s up until the late hymns,[7] the later versions of his *Hyperion* novel[8] as well as the different stages of development of Hölderlin's manuscripts[9] and the cyclical arrangement of his poems for publication.[10] Referring to cosmological models adopted by Johann Gottfried Herder, Hölderlin scholar Ulrich Gaier has called the 'Variation of Tones' a "Schöpfungshieroglyphe"[11] (a 'hieroglyph of creation') – a designation which suggests that the 'Variation of Tones' contains the secret key to the many mysteries of Hölderlin's hermetic writings. In the same vein, the *Hölderlin-Gesellschaft* in Tübingen has provided a "Lehrgang", an introduction to Hölderlin's poetics according to the tone sequences, which includes guided exercises in the implementation of Hölderlin's system of poetic tones.[12] It is not least the indistinctness of Hölderlin's notion of tone and the apparent speculativeness of

[4] Cf. P. Szondi, *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie II. Von der normativen zur spekulativen Gattungspoetik. Schellings Gattungspoetik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1974, pp. 152-183.

[5] Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., p. 101.

[6] Cf. L.J. Ryan, *Hölderlins Lehre vom Wechsel der Töne*, W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1960; U. Gaier, *Der gesetzliche Kalkül. Hölderlins Dichtungslehre*, Niemeyer, Tübingen 1962.

[7] Cf. U. Gaier, *Hölderlin. Eine Einführung*, Francke, Tübingen 1993, p. 244.

[8] Cf. Gaier, *Hölderlin. Eine Infürung*, cit., pp. 266-272.

[9] Cf. G. Martens, 'Hölderlins Poetik der Polyphonie. Ein Versuch, das Hymnenfragment "Die Nymphe"/"Mnemosyne" aus den Handschriften zu deuten', in V. Lawitschka (ed.), *Hölderlin: Sprache und Raum*, Edition Isele, Eggingen 2008, pp. 9-45.

[10] Cf. U. Gaier *et al.*, *Hölderlin Texturen 4: "Wo sind jezt Dichter?" Homburg, Stuttgart 1897–1800*, Hölderlin-Gesellschaft/Deutsche Schiller-Gesellschaft, Tübingen/Marbach 2002, pp. 315-320.

[11] Gaier, *Hölderlin. Eine Einführung*, cit., p. 245.

[12] The "Lehrgang" is currently no longer available online on the website of the Hölderlin-Gesellschaft but it has been documented by Ulrich Gaier: Cf. U. Gaier, 'Aufmerksamkeitsebenen: Hintergrundstudien zum Lehrgang', in Id., *Hölderlin-Studien*, eds. S. Doering, V. Lawitschka, Edition Isele/Hölderlin-Gesellschaft, Eggingen/Tübingen 2014, pp. 211-264.

his sketches that have encouraged extensive and potentially arbitrary applications of the 'Variation of Tones' to all parts and periods of his oeuvre. Consequently, the validity of the 'Variation of Tones' as an authorial poetics ('Autorpoetik') which might present an answer to the many questions raised by Hölderlin's enigmatic texts has been questioned as well. Notably, Lawrence Ryan, the author of a groundbreaking study on the 'Variation of Tones', has expressed his doubts as to whether the tonal systematics could be fruitfully applied to Hölderlin's later poems composed after 1801[13] – a reservation voiced by a number of scholars.[14] The following deliberations therefore propose to understand the 'Variation of Tones' not so much as a comprehensive poetics holding the secret key to Hölderlin's poetic production but rather as a manifestation of his own practice of reading. The sketches reveal an intrinsically processual conception of the poetic text which focuses in particular on moments of transition and translation and which searches for ways of describing these moments. Accordingly, the tonal 'mechanics' is not primarily conceived as a framework for poetic creation – what it presents, in fact, is a tool for reading modern literature, or more precisely: a kind of literature defined by genre hybridity, be it of ancient or modern origin. Perceiving the notes on the 'Variation of Tones' as a practice of reading means abstaining from breaking it down into a positive and enclosed system and instead drawing attention to the discrepancies between Hölderlin's many formulations and reformulations of the tone sequences[15] – it means recognising the 'Variation of Tones' as a temporary formation within a fundamentally experimental mode of thinking and writing.

[13] Cf. Ryan, cit., p. 161.

[14] Cf. for instance G. Kurz, *Mittelbarkeit und Vereinigung. Zum Verhältnis von Poesie, Reflexion und Revolution bei Hölderlin*, J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart 1975, p. 116; S. Gesse, *‚Genera mixta'. Studien zur Poetik der Gattungsmischung zwischen Aufklärung und Klassik-Romantik*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 1997, p. 221; C. Hamlin, 'The Philosophy of Poetic Form: Hölderlin's Theory of Poetry and the Classical German Elegy', in A. Fioretos (ed.), *The Solid Letter: Readings of Friedrich Hölderlin*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1999, pp. 291-319, at p. 304; R. Nägele, *Hölderlins Kritik der poetischen Vernunft*, Engeler, Basel/Weil am Rhein/Wien 2005, pp. 38f.

[15] Historical practices of reading and writing in modern philology have drawn increasing attention in recent studies in historical praxeology. Cf. E. Décultot (ed.), *Lesen, Kopieren, Schreiben. Lese- und Exzerpierkunst in der europäischen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Ripperger & Kremers, Berlin 2014, as well as S. Martus, C. Spoerhase, *Die Quellen der Praxis. Probleme einer historischen Praxeologie der Philologie*, in "Zeitschrift für Germanistik", 2 (2013), pp. 221-225. While these investigations, drawing on impulses from *science studies*, focus on reading and writing practices in the emerging humanities, the present contribution centres on a practice of reading within a poetological and aesthetic context.

1. *The 'Variation of Tones': Context and Genesis*

One difficulty with the reconstruction of the 'Variation of Tones' as the key to Hölderlin's poetics stems from the fact that his 'theory' was never formulated in a coherent or definitive manner. It is merely conveyed in the form of several sketches, tables and accompanying notes which at times complement one another but also diverge in certain points, thus revealing the semantic fluidity of Hölderlin's notion of tone and attesting to the constant re-modifications of Hölderlin's practice of reading. As Michael Franz has pointed out, none of Hölderlin's poetological manuscripts were meant to be published, although a publication project presumably inspired his first mention of the 'Variation of Tones'.[16] Hölderlin initially spoke of the 'Variation of Tones' in the context of his plans for a literary journal called "Iduna". As he informed his friend Christian Ludwig Neuffer in a letter from June 4, 1799, the journal was supposed to gather poetic and poetological texts that would address the 'specific art-character' of ancient and modern poets, as well as pieces of literary criticism and reflections on general problems of poetology and aesthetics, thus opening up the arcane mechanics of poetry to a general public.[17]

The first and only time that Hölderlin explicitly used the expression "Wechsel der Töne" is in a note to the essay fragment "The Perspective from Which We Have to Look at Antiquity" ("Der Gesichtspunkt aus dem wir das Altertum anzusehen haben"), which was written as part of the *Iduna* project presumably in the spring of 1799.[18] The note relates the 'Variation of Tones' to a planned series of 'Letters on Homer' which, judging from the remaining sketches, were meant to discuss the Homeric representation of Achilles in the *Iliad*. The idea of 'tone' as a mode of representation proper to certain anthropological types or characters, suggested by this early mention of the 'Variation of Tones', is further corroborated by two essay fragments written in the second half of 1799 – "A Word on the Iliad" ("Ein Wort über die Iliade") and "On the Different

[16] Cf. M. Franz, 'Theoretische Schriften', in J. Kreuzer (ed.), *Hölderlin-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart 2020, pp. 243-263, at p. 243.

[17] For Hölderlin's letter to Neuffer cf. F. Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke. Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe*, eds. Friedrich Beißner, Adolf Beck, Ute Oelmann, W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1943-1985, vol. 6.1, pp. 323f.; the historical context of Hölderlin's *Iduna* project has been reconstructed by Ulrich Gaier: cf. Gaier *et al.*, cit., pp. 137f. For Hölderlin's conception of a poetic mechanics as the key to a modern 'poetic public sphere' see R. Nägele, *Hermetik und Öffentlichkeit. Zu einigen historischen Voraussetzungen der Moderne bei Hölderlin*, in "Hölderlin-Jahrbuch", 19, 20 (1975-1977), pp. 358-386.

[18] Cf. Franz, cit., p. 259.

Forms of Poetic Composition" ("Über die verschiedenen Arten, zu dichten") – which indicate a connection between a 'natural character', epitomised by Achilles, and its poetic representation through a naïve or natural tone.[19]

A later stage of the formulation of the 'Variation of Tones' is recorded in the *Stuttgarter Foliobuch* and was probably drafted in the first half of the year 1800. It replaces the understanding of tone as a character type or mode of character representation with the idea of an emotive or cognitive capacity. The fragment begins with the words "The sentiment in the poem speaks idealistically …" ("Die Empfindung spricht im Gedicht idealisch …") and assumes three basic poetic genres – the naïve, the idealistic and the energetic poem – which are in turn related to three psychological faculties – passion, sentiment, and fantasy –, thus associating the notion of tone with the psychology of faculties that was widely discussed in eighteenth-century anthropology.[20] Passion, sentiment, and fantasy are arranged in sequences subsumed under the categories 'basic tone', 'language' and 'effect'. These categories suggest a conceptual proximity between this stage of the formulation of the 'Variation of Tones' and Hölderlin's famous essay fragment "On the Mode of Operation of the Poetic Spirit" ("Über die Verfahrungsweise des poetischen Geistes"/"Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig ist") in which Hölderlin worked out three modes of relating a poem's 'matter' ("Stoff") to its 'spirit' ("Geist").[21] Lawrence Ryan and others have elucidated the close connection between the two texts, showing in particular that the idea of the poem as a process of transition – a 'metaphor' in the literal sense –, systematised in the tone tables of the 'Variation of Tones', is developed in the essay "On the Mode of Operation of the Poetic Spirit".[22] This conception of the poem as a 'metaphor', in the ancient Greek sense of 'transport', resurfaces in a later set of sketches of the 'Variation of Tones' which presumably dates from the

[19] Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., p. 42f.: "Thus from this point, there follows the calmer moderation which is so proper to the natural tone, which shows the characters within their boundaries and gently subdivides them into various shades. The artist is not moderate in the poetic form because he considers this procedure the only poetic one […]; he had to choose a fixed point of view, and that is now the individual, the character of his hero, as he has gained a determinate personal existence, a reality by means of nature and education".

[20] Cf. Gaier, *Hölderlin. Eine Einführung*, cit., pp. 261-264.

[21] Cf. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., p. 64.

[22] Cf. Ryan, cit., pp. 36-48; Gaier, *Hölderlin. Eine Einführung*, cit., pp. 235-246; M. Hiller, *"Harmonisch entgegengesetzt". Darstellung und Darstellbarkeit in Hölderlins Poetik um 1800*, Niemeyer, Tübingen 2008, pp. 171-207.

second half of 1800. It consists of a series of consecutive tables of poetic tones accompanied by a written commentary of several pages. The beginning of the commentary reads:

> The lyric, in appearance idealistic poem, is naïve in its significance. It is a continuous metaphor of a feeling.
>
> The epic, in appearance naïve poem, is heroic in its significance. It is a metaphor of great aspirations.
>
> The tragic, in appearance heroic poem, is idealistic in its significance. It is the metaphor of an intellectual intuition.[23]

The commentary thus distinguishes – in line with the then contemporary genre poetics – between three poetic genres: lyric, epic and tragic poetry. These genres – or more precisely: the respective poems belonging to any one of the three genres – emerge through different combinations of three tones: the idealistic, the naïve, and the heroic (or energetic) tone. Unlike prevailing models of genre poetics, Hölderlin's draft thus does not define the genres by way of their form or their subject matter but through constellations of, or rather, through movements between tones, thus re-envisioning genre poetics within a relational framework. Accordingly, the lyric poem emerges from the relation of the naïve to the idealistic tone, the epic poem from the relation of the heroic to the naïve tone, and the tragic poem from the relation of the idealistic to the tragic tone. These tendencies between tones are registered with the categories of "significance" ("Bedeutung") and "appearance" ("Schein"), which Hölderlin also calls "basic tone" ("Grundton") and "art character" ("Kunstkarakter") in the course of his commentary. The beginning of the commentary describes a first set of tone tables consisting of four progressions which each detail the tone sequence of a genre (with two progressions for the tragic poem).

[23] Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., p. 83.

Figure 1. Images from F. Hölderlin, *Theoretische Schriften*, ed. by J. Kreuzer, Felix Meiner, Hamburg 1998, pp. 66-67.[24]

It follows from these progressions that the 'Variation of Tones' implies not only a relational understanding of genre, based on the constellation of tones, but also a processual conception according to which the double tones traverse a tabulated cycle of seven stages which constitute the "continuous metaphor". Hölderlin scholar Rainer Nägele has consequently compared these tables to structuralist accounts of language which distinguish between a paradigmatic and a syntagmatic axis, with the paradigm representing a relation produced by substitution and the syntagma a relation produced by positioning.[25] Poetic genre emerges from these tables as a synchronic relation between tones which passes through a diachronic sequence unfolding in time.[26] This sequential dimension of the 'Variation of Tones' is further detailed in a second set of tables which show that the seven-stage course of a poem pertaining to a certain genre is not necessarily bound to a particular constellation as its point of departure.

[24] I would like to thank Felix Meiner publishing for their permission to reproduce the figures from Hölderlin's text.

[25] Cf. R. Nägele, 'Ancient Sports and Modern Transports: Hölderlin's Tragic Bodies', in Fioretos, cit., pp. 247-267.

[26] Cf. Nägele, '1808 – Poetic Revolution', cit., p. 513.

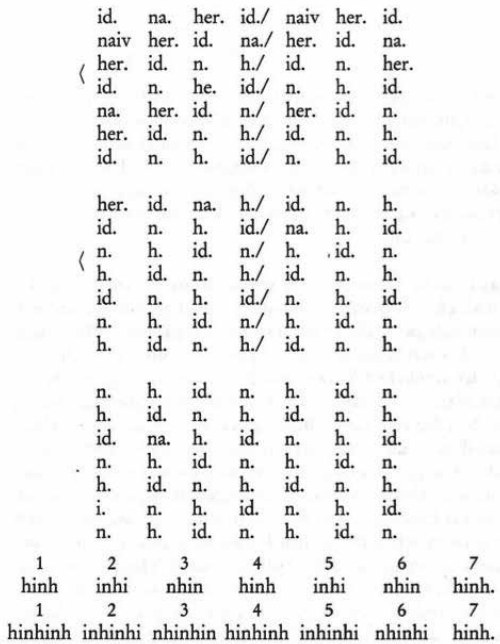

Figure 2. Image from F. Hölderlin, *Theoretische Schriften*, ed. by J. Kreuzer, Felix Meiner, Hamburg 1998, p. 67.

While the tone sequence remains identical, the progression can start – and consequently: end – with any of the three tones, thus constituting three sub-styles within one and the same genre. Hölderlin explains this differentiation within his processual genre system in the commentary, beginning with the lyric poem.

In its *basic mood*, the lyric poem is the *more sensuous* […]; precisely for that reason does it not strive in the outer appearance for reality, serenity and gracefulness; it evades the sensuous connection and presentation so much (because the pure basic tone inclines precisely toward it) that it is rather miraculous and supernatural in its formations and assembly of these, and the heroic energetic dissonances wherein it neither looses [!] its reality, its life, as in the idealistic image, nor its tendency toward ennoblement as in the immediate expression, these energetic dissonances that unite ennoblement and life are the resolution of the contradiction at which it [the lyric poem] arrives when, on the one hand, it can and will not fall into the sensuous, nor, on the other hand, deny its basic tone, the intimate life. However, if its basic tone is more heroic, richer in content, as for instance in a Pindaric hymn to the fencer Diagoras, if it therefore has to lose less inwardness, then it starts out naïve; if it is

more idealistic, more akin to the art-character, to the improper tone, if it has less life to lose, then it starts out heroic; if it is most inward, having content to lose, yet even more, ennoblement, purity of content, then it starts out idealistic.[27]

This passage of the commentary presupposes the first set of tone tables and their initial explication ("The lyric, in appearance idealistic poem, is naïve in its significance …") but it makes two important modifications. Because the lyric poem is "*more sensuous*" – or naïve – in its "*basic mood*" ("Grundstimmung"), it tends toward the idealistic tone: "it evades the sensuous connection and presentation so much (because the pure basic tone inclines precisely toward it) that it is rather miraculous and supernatural in its formations and assembly of these". Here, Hölderlin introduces a third tone – "the heroic energetic dissonances" – which serves to resolve the contradiction that transpires due to the constitutive opposition between the naïve and the idealistic tone: "these energetic dissonances that unite ennoblement and life are the resolution of the contradiction at which it [the lyric poem] arrives when, on the one hand, it can and will not fall into the sensuous, nor, on the other hand, deny its basic tone, the intimate life". This introduction of a third tone into the schema resolving the opposition between the other two tones can be regarded as one important modification of the initial formulation of the 'Variation of Tones' in this fragment; the other significant change consists in the specification that the lyric poem can depart from this first characteristic tone progression which assumes the naïve tone as its "basic tone", the idealistic as its "art-character" and the heroic as the third tone. Hölderlin cites Pindar's seventh Olympic Ode dedicated to the fencer Diagoras as one example of a lyric poem that begins its progression with the heroic tone as its "basic tone" and the naïve as its "art-character", adding moreover that a sequence starting with the idealistic as the "basic tone" and the heroic as the "art-character" might describe the progression of a lyric poem just as well. Hölderlin tabulates these different tone sequences of the lyric, the epic and the tragic poem in the second set of charts, integrating them into yet another set of seven stages. While it might follow from these charts that the tone sequences characteristic of each genre become to a certain extent interchangeable, some interpreters, among them Ulrich Gaier and Lawrence Ryan, have argued that they in fact allow us to distinguish between different sub-styles within one and the same genre.[28] Accordingly, the model would serve to differentiate

[27] Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., p. 83.

[28] Cf. Ryan, cit., p. 61; Gaier, *Der gesetzliche Kalkül. Hölderlins Dichtungslehre*, cit., p. 149.

between a lyric poem of the idealistic kind, a lyric poem of the naïve kind and a lyric poem of the heroic kind. Hölderlin applies the same differentiation to the epic poem in the subsequent part of his commentary.[29] In its final section, which addresses the tragic poem, the commentary departs from the structure of the previous parts in order to embark on a digression about the significance of intellectual intuition for the tragic poem, a digression which not only refers back to the beginning of the commentary[30] but also suggests conceptual affinities between the 'Variation of Tones' and other theoretical treatises relating to questions of tragic representation or epistemology going back as far as the early fragment on "Judgment and Being".[31] The commentary breaks off in the middle of Hölderlin's extensive remarks on the tragic poem.

This final formulation of the 'Variation of Tones', which explains literary genre formation through systematic sequences of the three poetic tones (naïve, idealistic and heroic) is the most developed elaboration of Hölderlin's poetological theory of tones. It absorbs ideas from the previous versions, such as the representation of a natural character through a naïve tone in the epic poem, which was the subject of the fragment "On the Different Forms of Poetic Composition", and it retains the basic setup of a mediation between a "basic tone" and its poetic appearance in "language", which was laid out in the draft beginning with the words "The sentiment in the poem speaks idealistically". Still, this last existing design of the 'Variation of Tones' leaves much room for speculation: What do the tones refer to exactly? And what would an implementation of the charts look like?

2. *Eighteenth-century Aesthetics and Poetics of Tone*

The notion of tone is ambiguous not only in Hölderlin's writings; it is characterised by a particular semantic fluidity in the broader context of eighteenth-century aesthetics and poetics as well.[32] *Grimms Wörterbuch*, the comprehensive nineteenth-century German-language dictionary, dedicates a lengthy entry to the term which registers its many different meanings. These comprise auditory phenomena ranging from undifferentiated noises ("Geräusch")

[29] Cf. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., p. 84.

[30] Cf. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., p. 83: "The tragic, in appearance heroic poem, is idealistic in its significance. It is the metaphor of an intellectual intuition".

[31] Cf. Franz, cit., pp. 248f.

[32] Gerhard Kurz offers an overview of the notion of tone in eighteenth-century aesthetics, citing writers like Herder, Sulzer, or Klopstock. Cf. Kurz, cit., pp. 112f.

to musical sounds ("Klang"), including phonology ("Sprachton"), as well as visual phenomena such as the shade of colour ("Farbton"). According to the *Wörterbuch*, tone used to denote any manner or way of doing something, a use which has narrowed down since the Middle Ages to certain modes of expression, particularly in written language, and to patterns of behaviour or to certain dispositions of mind or atmosphere ("Gemütsstimmung").[33] Lastly, the term can be applied to describe a quality of relation, more precisely, a state of tension (e.g., 'toned muscles') – a meaning of tone which can be traced back to the Latin root *tonus*, as distinct from its other etymological root: the Latin word *sonus*.[34] Most of these denotations – and more – have been traced in Hölderlin's usage.

The most prominent sense of the word in Hölderlin's writings may be its musical meaning.[35] Ulrich Gaier has convincingly demonstrated the influence that Hölderlin's encounter with the writer and scholar Johann Jakob Wilhelm Heinse in 1796 had on his elaboration of the 'Variation of Tones'.[36] In his novel *Hildegard von Hohenthal* (1795-1796), Heinse had developed a theory of musical tone relations and intervals which is likely to have shaped Hölderlin's idea of double tones and their sequential modulation. Uta Degner has recently argued for an intermedial understanding of tone, highlighting its visual dimension as a shade of colour which was pervasive for instance in the aesthetic reflections of Hölderlin's contemporary Johann Georg Sulzer.[37] The anthropological sense of 'tone' as a means to distinguishing between certain character types and their poetic representation is found in the context of Hölderlin's early sketches for the *Iduna* project.[38] Ulrich Gaier has consequently sought to apply the three tones to the later version of Hölderlin's *Hyperion* novel, relating them to the characters Hype-

[33] Cf. J. Grimm, W. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, URL = https://woerterbuchnetz.de/?sigle=DWB#1: "ton ist im sprachgebrauch des späteren mittelalters oft ganz allgemein ‚die art und weise überhaupt', doch hat sich diese verwendung in späterer zeit nur ganz vereinzelt und kaum merklich fortgesetzt".

[34] Cf. *ibid*.

[35] The musical dimension of Hölderlin's poetological theory is the subject of an edited volume recently published by Gianmario Borio and Elena Polledri: cf. G. Borio, E. Polledri (eds.), *"Wechsel der Töne". Musikalische Elemente in Friedrich Hölderlins Dichtung und ihre Rezeption bei den Komponisten*, Winter, Heidelberg 2019.

[36] U. Gaier, *Neubegründung der Lyrik auf Heinses Musiktheorie*, in "Hölderlin-Jahrbuch", 31 (1998-1999), pp. 129-138.

[37] U. Degner, *Bilder im Wechsel der Töne. Hölderlins Elegien und "Nachtgesänge"*, Winter, Heidelberg 2008, pp. 47-54.

[38] Monika Sproll has recently presented an extensive study of the notion of 'character' and the 'characteristic' in eighteenth-century philosophy and aesthetics which dedicates an entire chapter to Hölderlin's notion of 'character'. Cf. M. Sproll, *Das "Charakteristische". Studien zu "Charakter"-Konzepten und zur Ästhetik des "Charakteristischen" von Leibniz bis Hölderlin*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2020, pp. 278-342.

rion (heroic/tragic), Diotima (lyric/idealistic) and Alabanda (epic/naïve) and their respective development throughout the narrative.[39] Both Ulrich Gaier and Uta Degner have, moreover, pointed out the significance of the idea of a state of tension, expressed in the Latin *tonus*, which seems crucial to Hölderlin's relational model of the 'Variation of Tones'.[40] As another source, Ulrich Gaier has identified neoplatonic ontology and its distinction between three different states of being, which Hölderlin presumably became aware of in his study of the writings of Proclus and Marsilio Ficino and their adaptation through Herder.[41]

This cursory overview of the scholarly discussion around Hölderlin's notion of tone may suffice to show that the additional contextualisation does not help to resolve the polysemy of the term in his texts. It is helpful, however, in order to highlight the range of meanings which are likely to have informed the different formulations of the 'Variation of Tones' at one point or another. The striking polysemy of the term may complicate an interpretation of the 'Variation of Tones' as a normative poetics guiding Hölderlin's own creation – but it presents no obstacle for an understanding of the 'Variation of Tones' as an elaboration of Hölderlin's practice of reading.

3. *The 'Variation of Tones' as a Practice of Reading*

The very fact that Hölderlin first mentioned the 'Variation of Tones' in the context of his 'Letters on Homer' strongly suggests that the tone models were initially developed out of his experience of reading literature and that they were meant to describe and to communicate this experience, more particularly, the encounter with texts – be they of ancient or modern provenance – that combine different genres or 'generic tones'. References to his readings occur repeatedly in Hölderlin's notes: He alludes to Pindar's Seventh Olympic Ode in his commentary on possible tone sequences for the lyric poem; in his remarks on the epic poem, he cites Homer's *Iliad* as one example.[42] Most strikingly perhaps, Hölderlin designs two different tone progressions for the tragic poem in one version of his charts, which seem to be

[39] Cf. Gaier, *Hölderlin. Eine Einführung*, cit., p. 271.
[40] Cf. Gaier, *Neubegründung der Lyrik auf Heinses Musiktheorie*, cit., p. 137; Degner, cit., p. 53.
[41] Cf. Gaier, *Hölderlin. Eine Einführung*, cit., p. 259.
[42] Cf. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., pp. 83f.

based on Sophocles's tragedies *Ajax* and *Antigone*.[43] The tone tables and their explications can hence be understood as a testament to Hölderlin's own way of reading literature – a reading practice which perceives the literary text as unfolding in time and which is especially attuned to processes of transition within this text-as-process.

It is this attention to operations of linguistic transfer that connects Hölderlin's practice of reading to his work as a translator. As a matter of fact, the readings that fostered his development of the 'Variation of Tones' largely consisted of texts by authors that Hölderlin translated into German (e.g. Pindar, Homer, Sophocles).[44] Both activities – reading literature shaped by genre hybridity as well as translating texts from one language into another – are motivated by an interest in the 'metaphor' in its literal sense; more precisely, they aim at making the dynamics of transport in and through language intelligible. At the most basic level, the practices of reading and translating rely on operations of transfer – between different languages or between different tones within one and the same language. Hölderlin's practice and theory of translation have been the subject of extensive study in recent years; in this context, Ulrich Gaier has pointed out the proximity between the theory of the 'Variation of Tones' and Hölderlin's reflections on translation.[45] In their focus on moments of transition, reading and translating emerge as two distinct, yet connected sets of practices.[46]

While the 'Variation of Tones' emerges as an expression of Hölderlin's own reading practice, there are other annotations implying that it may, at times, have served as a principle guiding his

[43] Cf. Hölderlin, *Theoretische Schriften*, cit., p. 66.

[44] Cf. B. Böschenstein, 'Übersetzungen', in J. Kreuzer (ed.), *Hölderlin-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, cit., pp. 284-301.

[45] Cf. U. Gaier, *Übertragen. Zu Hölderlins Sprachphilosophie*, in "Hölderlin-Jahrbuch", 29 (1994-1995), pp. 22-46. For a comprehensive overview of Hölderlin's work as a translator cf. B. Böschenstein, *Göttliche Instanz und irdische Antwort in Hölderlins drei Übersetzungsmodellen. Pindar: Hymnen – Sophokles – Pindar: Fragmente*, in "Hölderlin-Jahrbuch", 29 (1994-1995), pp. 47-63; C. Louth, *Hölderlin and the Dynamics of Translation*, Legenda, Oxford 1998; S. Bernofsky, *Foreign Words: Translator-Authors in the Age of Goethe*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit (MI) 2005; B. Previšić, *Die Übersetzung von Rhythmus: Hölderlins Transitprogramm hin zu einer „belebenden Kunst"*, in "Transit: A Journal of Travel, Migration, and Multiculturalism in the German-speaking World", 2, 1 (2006), URL = https://transit.berkeley.edu/2006/previsic/. Elena Polledri has focused in particular on the correlation between theories and practices of translation in the context of German literature of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: cf. E. Polledri, *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers in der Goethezeit. Deutsche Übersetzungen italienischer Klassiker von Tasso bis Dante*, Narr, Tübingen 2010.

[46] The question of how and to what effect (social) practices are interconnected has been a matter of interest in recent practice theory. Cf. A. Reckwitz, *Grundelemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken. Eine sozialtheoretische Perspektive*, in "Zeitschrift für Soziologie", 32/4 (2003), pp. 282-301, at p. 295.

poetic production as well. The text fragment "The sentiment in the poem speaks idealistically …" ends with the note: "Style of the song Diotima".[47] It has not been settled whether Hölderlin referred here to any of the existing versions of his ode to Diotima, which he revised several times between 1796 and 1798, or to a text which has been lost or was never written. It may also be surmised that this note indicates Hölderlin's application of the 'Variation of Tones' as a tool for reading his own texts. Besides this note, his use of the tone sequences as a principle of poetic composition is conveyed in a fragmentary plan for a poem entitled "Ovid's Return to Rome" ("Ovids Rückkehr nach Rom") which begins with the sequence "id. n. her. id. n. h. id".[48] (the first tone progression of the lyric poem). Apart from these jottings, however, there is little to suggest that Hölderlin's texts can be decoded by means of the 'Variation of Tones'. While his sketches do not add up to a systematic poetics, their lack of consistency does not diminish their value for our understanding of Hölderlin's poetology – on the contrary, the sketches afford us a glimpse into his perception of the literary text as a motion between different generic markers, a conception of literature shaped by a particular susceptibility for moments of transition. It remains a matter of speculation whether Hölderlin had originally intended to develop the 'Variation of Tones' into a propaedeutic for aesthetic experience as part of his *Iduna* project. What is left of the 'Variation of Tones', however, does suggest an invitation to follow the movements of a literary text as closely as possible and to make this reading experience communicable.[49]

4. *Tone Progressions and the Philosophy of History*

It has been a matter of debate to what extent Hölderlin's processual conception of literature as expressed in the 'Variation of Tones' was in line with the then contemporary philosophy of history. Peter Szondi has argued that the philosophy of history was in fact implied in Hölderlin's sketches, contending that 'while the tones are in and of themselves historically neutral, their combination is immersed

[47] Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., p. 87.
[48] Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, cit., vol. 2.1, p. 320.
[49] Cyrus Hamlin has stressed the hermeneutic function of the 'Variation of Tones'. Cf. Hamlin, cit., p. 311: "In this sense, the primary function of the tonal modulation is hermeneutical, imposing upon the reader an obligation to participate in the full cognitive complexity of the poem as performance, like a symphony of reflective thought".

in the philosophy of history'.[50] Szondi's argument principally rests on Hölderlin's letter to his friend Casimir Ulrich Böhlendorff from December 4, 1801, in which he distinguished between the poetry of the ancients and that of the moderns, or rather, between their respective 'tones', namely "the fire from heaven" and the "sacred pathos" on the side of the ancients and the "clarity of presentation" and "*Junonian sobriety*" proper to the moderns.[51] Hölderlin explained in his letter that the modern poets need not give up their own qualities – or tones – in order to emulate the ancients but that they should instead adopt the poetic stance of the ancients in order to bring their own poetic potential to full fruition.[52] Szondi accordingly reconstructs a structural analogy between the argument of the Böhlendorff letter, which he sees as informed by the contemporary philosophy of history, and the 'Variation of Tones', where the initial opposition between two tones is resolved in the sequence through the recourse to a third tone. It is this third tone in particular – Hölderlin also calls it the "spirit of the poem"[53] – which allows Szondi to construe the 'Variation of Tones' as a poetological realisation of the philosophy of history.

> That which adds the third tone to the two tones – basic mood and art-character – (the idealistic tone in the epic, the naïve tone in the tragedy, and the heroic tone in the lyric poem) is called the spirit of the poem. It is this third [element] which shows, even more distinctly than the other two elements which constitute the artwork in Hölderlin's poetics, the secret identity of the theories of the variation of tones and of the difference of poetic modes with the later conception based on the philosophy of history, communicated in the letter to Böhlendorff, and which thus reveals the poetic modes [genres] as historically contingent, and Hölderlin's genre poetics as philosophy of history.[54]

[50] My own translation, E.R. Cf. P. Szondi, 'Gattungspoetik und Geschichtsphilosophie. Mit einem Exkurs über Schiller, Schlegel und Hölderlin', in Id., *Hölderlin-Studien. Mit einem Traktat* über *philologische Erkenntnis*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1970, pp. 119-169, at p. 122: "so sind die drei *Töne* der Hölderlinschen Poetik als solche historisch neutral, Geschichtsphilosophie aber in ihre Kombinatorik eingesenkt".

[51] Cf. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., p. 149.

[52] Cf. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., p. 150.

[53] Cf. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., p. 84: "If that which unites and negotiates the basic tone and the art-character of a poem is the spirit of the poem, if that one has to be sustained the most, and if in the epic poem the spirit is the idealistic, then the epic poem has to remain mostly with the latter".

[54] My own translation, E.R. Cf. Szondi, 'Gattungspoetik und Geschichtsphilosophie. Mit einem Exkurs über Schiller, Schlegel und Hölderlin', cit., p. 133: "Was den beiden Tönen von Grundstimmung und Kunstcharakter den dritten hinzufügt (beim Epos den idealischen, bei der Tragödie den naiven, beim lyrischen Gedicht den heroischen), wird der Geist des Gedichts genannt. Deutlicher noch als die beiden anderen Momente, die in Hölderlins Poetik das Kunstwerk konstituieren, zeigt dieses dritte die geheime Identität der Lehren vom Wechsel der Töne und vom Unterschied der Dichtarten mit der späteren, im Brief an Böhlendorff mitgeteilten geschichtsphilosophischen Konzeption und erweist solcherart die Dichtarten als geschichtlich bedingte, Hölderlins Gattungspoetik als Geschichtsphilosophie".

Peter Szondi thus builds his argument on a structural analogy between Hölderlin's opposition of ancient and modern poetry and its resolution in the Böhlendorff letter and the triadic structure at the basis of the 'Variation of Tones'. In order to substantiate his claim, he draws on another fragment by Hölderlin from the context of the 'Variation of Tones' which reads:

> The tragic poet is well advised to study the lyric [poet], the lyric the epic [poet], the epic the tragic [poet]. For in the tragic lies the perfection [Vollendung] of the epic, in the lyric the perfection of the tragic, in the epic the perfection of the lyric. For if the perfection of all is the mixed expression of all, [it follows that] in each of them, it is one of the three sides which stands out most.[55]

It is in the idea of "perfection" ("Vollendung") of one genre through the other that Szondi recognises a logic of progression common to both the 'Variation of Tones' and the philosophy of history:

> It thus seems obvious to recognise in this perfection not only the spirit, that is, the resolution of the opposition between proper and improper tone in the individual poem, but the next stage in a process which corresponds in Hegel's philosophy of history, and already in his *Science of Logic*, to that [process] conceived by Hölderlin in his writings from the Homburg period: one [element] reaches perfection, becoming itself entirely by transcending itself, turning into a third [element] through the mediation with its other.[56]

What supports the affinity between the progressive perfection of tones and Hegel's philosophy of history, Szondi continues to specify, is, surprisingly, its irresolvable entanglement with cyclical structures – for the progressive arrangement of the three tones is embedded in a cyclical framework. This paradoxical integration of cyclical and progressive movements in Hölderlin's 'Variation of Tones' in no way dissociates it from the contemporary philosophy of history but, on the contrary, confirms its intrinsic connection.[57]

[55] My own translation, E.R. Cf. Hölderlin, *Theoretische Schriften*, cit., p. 68: "Der tragische Dichter thut wohl, den lyrischen, der lyrische den epischen, der epische den tragischen zu studiren. Denn im tragischen liegt die Vollendung des epischen, im lyrischen die Vollendung des tragischen, im epischen die Vollendung des lyrischen. Denn wenn schon die Vollendung von allen ein vermischter Ausdruk von allen ist, so ist doch eine der drei Seiten in jedem die hervorstechendste".

[56] My own translation, E.R. Cf. Szondi, 'Gattungspoetik und Geschichtsphilosophie. Mit einem Exkurs über Schiller, Schlegel und Hölderlin', cit., p. 144: "[S]o liegt es nahe, in dieser Vollendung nicht bloß den Geist, d.h. die Auflösung des Gegensatzes von eigentlichem und uneigentlichem Ton im einzelnen Gedicht zu sehen, sondern die nächste Stufe in einem Prozeß, der in Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie, wie auch schon in seiner Logik, dem in Hölderlins Homburger Schriften konzipierten entspricht: eines vollendet sich, wird ganz es selbst, indem es über sich hinausgeht und mit seinem anderen zu einem dritten sich vermittelt".

[57] Cf. Szondi, 'Gattungspoetik und Geschichtsphilosophie. Mit einem Exkurs über Schiller, Schlegel und Hölderlin', cit., pp. 144-146.

It is noteworthy that Hölderlin's model of tone movements does not steer in any definite direction: while contemporary classicist accounts saw tragedy as the end point of the evolution of poetic genres, the Romantics declared the epic – or rather, the novel – to be the ultimate tendency of a triadic model of literary history.[58] No such tendency can be conclusively identified in Hölderlin's design, which presents its elements as homologous without attributing a higher value to any one of the three tones. If anything, tragedy might constitute the vanishing point of the 'Variation of Tones', as the commentary on the tragic poem seems to absorb all other genres, leading into a discussion of fundamental problems of aesthetic representation common to all genres.[59] In the end, Szondi's efforts to reconstruct the points of contact between Hölderlin's poetics and Hegel's philosophy of history may serve to underline the imponderabilities of his poetry's relation to history. In its proto-structuralist design, the 'Variation of Tones' at first sight seems far removed from any historicising approach to literature, and yet it may be precisely its increased awareness of processes of transition which makes the 'Variation of Tones' particularly apt for the description of historical change. In this sense, it could be said to prefigure the disintegration of history into mere succession, which Rainer Nägele has identified as an underlying principle at work in Hölderlin's late hymns.[60]

The lasting fascination that the 'Variation of Tones' has had for Hölderlin's interpreters may originate not least in these many imponderabilities: as a genre poetics, the 'Variation of Tones' vacillates between an essentialist and a relational understanding of literary genre – as a model of literary history, it embeds literature's own processuality within a proto-structuralist framework, thus manifesting a tension inherent in the then contemporary philosophy of history. By reducing poetry's motion to calculable formulas, the apparently mechanical design of the 'Variation of Tones' went against the grain of the late eighteenth-century poetics of genius. Understood as a practice of reading, it portends not so much a theory of poetic production as it highlights a certain 'mechanics of perception' with regards to poetry. This 'mechanics' emerges through a routinised sensitivity to fissures or transitions between different genres within the poetic text. In its mechanical design, the 'Variation of Tones'

[58] Cf. Szondi, *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie II. Von der normativen zur spekulativen Gattungspoetik. Schellings Gattungspoetik*, cit., p. 135.

[59] Cf. Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory*, cit., pp. 84-86, as well as Gesse, cit., pp. 226-229.

[60] Cf. R. Nägele, *Text, Geschichte und Subjektivität in Hölderlins Dichtung. "Uneßbarer Schrift gleich"*, J.B. Metzler, Stuttgart 1985, p. 103.

gives us a sense of Hölderlin's way of reading poetry and inspires us, at the same time, to reflect on our own practices of reading literature shaped by genre hybridity.

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Zwischen Systemanspruch und Systemkritik. Friedrich Schlegels 'Offenes System im Werden'

von Johannes Korngiebel*

ABSTRACT
For a long time, Friedrich Schlegel's thought was considered and interpreted exclusively as critical of systems. However, this view does not correspond to Schlegel's own understanding of his thought. In fact, Schlegel takes a position that draws attention to the problems of overly rigid systematic concepts without abandoning the systematic claim of philosophising. After a brief overview of his early system thinking, the article focuses on Schlegel's critique of strict philosophical systems, on the one hand, and his own claim to a system, on the other. It is shown how Schlegel, in distinction from Fichte and Spinoza, develops the idea of a connection between systematic claims and system critique or, put another way, between system and systemlessness. Only such an open system model is suitable for adequately reflecting the dynamic nature of philosophising. Schlegel put this claim forward for the first time in his Jena Lecture on Transcendental Philosophy of 1800/1801. The Lecture must be understood as a system in the process of becoming, open to development, incomplete and consequently relative, which comprises a multitude of historically evolving systems and which can only adequately be represented through the interplay of philosophy and poetry.

KEYWORDS
Romanticism, Idealism, Transcendental Philosophy, System, Relativism

Das Denken der Frühromantik und insbesondere Friedrich Schlegels wurde lange als ausschließlich systemkritisch gewertet und rezipiert. Vorherrschend war die Meinung, dass Schlegel das System als Form der Philosophie grundsätzlich ablehne und auch für sein eigenes Denken nicht in Anspruch nehme. In diesem Sinne stellte etwa Kurt Röttgers fest: "Schlegel ist kein Systematiker, weder im Sinne des von ihm selbst formulierten Systemgedankens, noch in irgendeinem anderen irgendwie zu rechtfertigenden Sinne".[1] Erst in der jüngeren Vergangenheit

* Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv der Klassik Stiftung Weimar (DE), johannes.korngiebel@klassik-stiftung.de

[1] K. Röttgers, *Fichtes Wirkung auf die Frühromantiker, am Beispiel Friedrich Schlegels. Ein Beitrag zur 'Theoriepragmatik'*, in "DVJS", 51, 1977, S. 55-77, S. 68.

wurde darauf hingewiesen, dass diese Auffassung nicht dem Schlegelschen Selbstverständnis entspricht.[2] Vielmehr vertrete Schlegel eine Position, die auf Probleme allzu starrer Systembegriffe aufmerksam mache, ohne den systematischen Anspruch des Philosophierens generell in Frage zu stellen. Ausgehend von dieser These soll im Folgenden Schlegels spezifisches Systemdenken genauer untersucht werden. Dabei ist einerseits seine Kritik strenger philosophischer Systeme und andererseits sein eigener Systemanspruch näher in den Blick zu nehmen. Darüber hinaus wird in diesem Beitrag erstmals gezeigt, wie Schlegel in seiner Jenaer Vorlesung zur *Transcendentalphilosophie* von 1800/01 die Idee eines entwicklungsoffenen, unabschließbaren und folglich relativen Systems im Werden entwickelt, das als Verbindung von System und Systemlosigkeit zu verstehen ist.

1. *Schlegels frühes Systemdenken*

Tatsächlich deuten verschiedene Textstellen darauf hin, dass Schlegel eine solche, zwischen Systemanspruch und Systemkritik vermittelnde Auffassung schon früh vertreten hat. Bereits im August 1793 schreibt er seinem Bruder August Wilhelm:

> Was wir in Werken, Handlungen, und Kunstwerken *Seele* heißen (im Gedichte nenne ichs gern Herz) im Menschen Geist und sittliche Würde, in der Schöpfung Gott, – lebendigster Zusammenhang – das ist in Begriffen System. Es giebt nur Ein <wirkliches> System – die große Verborgene, die ewige Natur, oder die *Wahrheit*. – Aber denke Dir alle menschliche Gedanken als ein Ganzes, so leuchtet ein, daß die Wahrheit, die vollendete Einheit das nothwendige obschon *nie* erreichbare Ziel alles Denkens ist.[3]

Schon hier erkennt Schlegel den systematischen Anspruch im Sinne eines ‚lebendigen Zusammenhangs' an, zeigt sich hinsichtlich der ‚vollendeten Einheit' dieses Ganzen und der Möglichkeit seiner Realisation aber skeptisch. Den damit verbundenen systemkritischen Akzent wiederholt er in der Folge immer wieder. So stellt er noch im gleichen Jahr fest, dass das System "einer der Fremdlinge" sei, "die mit Feuer und Dolch getilgt werden müssen, wenn die Wissenschaft gedeihen soll".[4]

[2] Vgl. A. Arndt, 'Friedrich Schlegels dialektischer Systembegriff', in C. Danz, J. Stolzenberg (Hrsg.), *System und Systemkritik um 1800*, Meiner, Hamburg 2011, S. 287-300, S. 288. Zuvor hatte lediglich Ernst Behler diese Auffassung vertreten: vgl. *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, E. Behler u. a. (Hrsg.), Schöningh, Paderborn u. a. 1958 ff. (im Folgenden als KFSA abgekürzt), 2, XL.

[3] KFSA 23, 129 f.

[4] KFSA 23, 143.

Dennoch dürfen derart gewollt provokative Aussagen nicht darüber hinwegtäuschen, dass Schlegel den systematischen Anspruch der Philosophie keinesfalls aufgeben will.[5] Das zeigt sich u. a. daran, dass er fast zeitgleich auf den "Geist des Systems" besteht, der "allein zur Vielseitigkeit" führe, aber eben "etwas ganz anders" sei "als ein System". Schlegels Denken zielt folglich durchaus auf Systematizität, möchte diese aber nicht als System fassen. Diesen vermeintlichen Widerspruch, der "paradox scheinen" könne, "aber sehr unläugbar" sei,[6] hat Schlegel immer wieder hervorgehoben.[7] Spätestens seit 1797 verbindet er damit die Idee, man müsse, um Einseitigkeiten zu vermeiden und zu einem produktiven Systembegriff zu gelangen, beide Extreme "verbinden".[8] Es geht Schlegel folglich um einen Mittelweg zwischen Systemanspruch und Systemkritik. Seinen klassischen Ausdruck hat dieser Anspruch in dem berühmten Athenäums-Fragment Nr. 53 gefunden, in dem aus der Feststellung, es sei "gleich tödlich für den Geist, ein System zu haben, und keins zu haben", die Forderung abgeleitet wird, "beides zu verbinden".[9] Damit wird deutlich, dass Schlegel das System als Form der Philosophie keineswegs grundsätzlich ablehnt. Er sucht vielmehr nach einer Möglichkeit, die Nachteile allzu starrer Systembegriffe zu vermeiden, ohne den systematischen Anspruch des Philosophierens preiszugeben.

2. *Systemkritik und Systemanspruch*

Bevor auf die konkrete Umsetzung dieses spezifischen Systemmodells einzugehen ist, sollen zunächst beide Seiten – Schlegels Systemkritik wie auch sein Systemanspruch – etwas näher untersucht werden. Im Falle der Systemkritik ist zu berücksichtigen, dass Schlegel sich nicht gegen den allgemeinen Sprachgebrauch der Zeit wendet, der mit dem Begriff ‚System' ganz generell einen Zusammenhang philosophischer Sätze oder ein bestimmtes Lehrgebäude eines Philosophen bezeichnet. Vielmehr setzt sich Schlegel mit einer spezifischen, sehr viel strengeren Auffassung

[5] Zu Schlegels Systemdenken der Frühzeit vgl. Arndt, 'Friedrich Schlegels dialektischer Systembegriff', zit., S. 292.

[6] KFSA 23, 130.

[7] So heißt es in Schlegels Aufsatz *Über die Diotima* von 1795: "Solange das einzig-wahre System nicht entdeckt war, oder solange es nur noch unvollkommen dargestellt ist, bleibt das systematische Verfahren mehr oder weniger trennend und isolierend; das systemlose lyrische Philosophieren zerstört wenigstens das Ganze der Wahrheit nicht so sehr" (KFSA 1, 98).

[8] Vgl. KFSA 18, 80, Nr. 614. Vgl. auch: KFSA 19, 76 f., Nr. 346.

[9] KFSA 2, 173.

des Systems auseinander, die um 1790 vor allem von Reinhold und Fichte entwickelt worden war.[10] Den Ausgangspunkt dieser Bemühungen bildete Kants Auffassung, dass die "menschliche Vernunft […] ihrer Natur nach architektonisch" sei und "alle Erkenntnisse als gehörig zu einem möglichen System" betrachte.[11] Zwar hatte Kant selbst den Begriff des Systems noch recht allgemein als "Einheit der mannigfaltigen Erkenntnisse unter einer Idee" gefasst,[12] schon die Nachfolger entwickelten aber einen Systembegriff, der darauf zielte, die Gesamtheit des Wissens aus einem obersten, unbedingten Grundsatz abzuleiten.[13] Damit vertraten Reinhold und insbesondere Fichte eine "sehr viel rigidere Vorstellung" des Systems als sie bis dahin vorherrschend gewesen war.[14] Für diesen spezifischen Systembegriff gelten Fichtes Schrift *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* von 1794 zufolge drei wichtige Voraussetzungen: 1) Das Ganze des Systems muss auf einen ersten, unbedingten und unmittelbar gewissen Satz aufgebaut werden, der das gesamte System begründet. 2) Jeder Satz des Systems muss mit strenger Notwendigkeit aus diesem Grundsatz abgeleitet werden, sodass alle Sätze in einem kohärenten Bedingungszusammenhang zueinanderstehen. 3) Das System soll die Gesamtheit aller möglichen Sätze vollständig umfassen und kann insofern universelle Geltung für sich in Anspruch nehmen.

Diese Konzeption eines philosophischen Systems mit seinen Merkmalen *Grundsatz*, *Ableitbarkeit* und *Vollständigkeit* hat Schlegel aus verschiedenen Gründen abgelehnt. Gut erforscht sind inzwischen seine Einwände gegen die "Grundsucher",[15] die wie Reinhold und Fichte die Auffassung vertreten, das Ganze der Philosophie könne und müsse aus einem unmittelbar gewissen Grundsatz abgeleitet werden. Obwohl Schlegel dieser Idee an-

[10] Vgl. B. Frischmann, 'Der philosophische Beitrag der deutschen Frühromantik und Hölderlins', in H. J. Sandkühler (Hrsg.), *Handbuch Deutscher Idealismus*, Metzler, Stuttgart-Weimar 2005, S. 326-354, S. 342 und T. Borsche, 'System und Aphorismus', in M. Djuric, J. Simon (Hrsg.), *Nietzsche und Hegel*, Königshausen und Neumann, Würzburg 1992, S. 48-64, S. 48 f.

[11] I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunt*, in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, hrsg. von der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Reimer, Berlin 1904, B 502. Obwohl Kant das Systemdenken ohne jeden Zweifel angeregt habe, stimmt Schlegel mit Reinhold, Fichte und Schelling darin überein, dass seine Philosophie noch "kein System" sei (KFSA 18, 22, Nr. 41, vgl. auch KFSA 12, 72).

[12] Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunt*, zit., B 860.

[13] Zu dieser Entwicklung vgl. Borsche, 'System und Aphorismus', zit., S. 48 ff.

[14] U. Stadler, 'System und Systemlosigkeit. Bemerkungen zu einer Darstellungsform im Umkreis idealistischer Philosophie und frühromantischer Literatur', in W. Jaeschke, H. Holzhey (Hrsg.), *Früher Idealismus und Frühromantik. Der Streit um die Grundlagen der Ästhetik (1795-1805)*, Meiner, Hamburg 1990, S. 52-68, S. 59.

[15] KFSA 18, 19, Nr. 5.

fangs selbst anhing,[16] wendet er bereits ab Herbst 1796 (und nicht zuletzt im Kontext der früheren Jenaer Diskussionen um Reinhold und Fichte) gegen sie ein, dass eine "lebendige Philosophie […] nicht mit einem Grundsatz beginnen" könne, weil "aus einer solchen Identität gar nichts herzuleiten sei".[17] Damit verbunden ist die Auffassung, dass der Anfang der Philosophie nur dann als wahrhaft absolut gelten könne, wenn er auch das Gegenteil seiner selbst enthalte. Schlegel zufolge muss die Philosophie und mit ihr das System daher statt mit "*grundlosen* Sätzen" mit "*widersprechenden*" anfangen.[18] Das Grundsatzprogramm Reinholds und Fichtes will er durch einen sogenannten "Wechselgrundsatz"[19] oder "*Wechselerweis*"[20] ersetzen, aus dem sich die Dynamik der Philosophie ergeben soll.[21]

Auch darüber hinaus macht Schlegel aber auf Probleme allzu strenger Systemkonzeptionen aufmerksam. Obgleich er die Forderung des Zusammenhangs der Sätze prinzipiell befürwortet, gibt er doch zu bedenken, dass die Mathematik nicht das Musterbild philosophischer Systeme abgeben könne.[22] Dieser Punkt richtet sich weniger gegen Fichte und Reinhold, als vielmehr gegen Spinoza, dessen Denken Schlegel begeisterte, dessen Form er allerdings ablehnte. Dabei richtet er sich insbesondere gegen die geometrische Methode, die als bloße Form des Denkens "ohne allen Schaden" weggenommen werden könne.[23] Von ihr heißt es in den Kölner Vorlesungen über die *Entwicklung der Philosophie*:

[16] Vgl.: "Die revolutionäre Objektivitätswut meiner frühern philosophischen Musikalien hat etwas weniges von der Grundwut, die unter Reinholds Konsulate in der Philosophie so gewaltig um sich griff" (KFSA 2, 155, Nr. 66).

[17] B. Frischmann, 'Kant und Fichte: Zwischen Transzendentalphilosophie und Wissenschaftslehre', in J. Endres (Hrsg.), *Friedrich Schlegel-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, Metzler, Stuttgart 2017, S. 45-50, S. 46. Vgl. Schlegels Notiz: "*Die φ<Philosophie>* im eigentl<ichen> Sinne hat weder einen Grundsatz, noch einen Gegenstand, noch eine bestimmte Aufgabe" (KFSA 18, 7, Nr. 36).

[18] KFSA 18, 407, Nr. 1045.

[19] KFSA 18, 36, Nr. 193.

[20] KFSA 18, 521, Nr. 22.

[21] Vgl. M. Frank, "Wechselgrundsatz'. Friedrich Schlegels philosophischer Ausgangspunkt', in M. Frank (Hrsg.), *Auswege aus dem Deutschen Idealismus*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 2007, S. 88-116, M. Frank, *"Alle Wahrheit ist relativ, alles Wissen symbolisch". Motive der Grundsatz-Skepsis in der frühen Jenaer Romantik*, in "Revue Internationale de Philosophie", 50, 197/3, 1996, S. 403-436 und M. Frank, *"Unendliche Annäherung". Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1998², S. 868 ff. sowie G. Naschert, *Friedrich Schlegel über Wechselerweis und Ironie (Teil 1)*, in "Athenäum. Jahrbuch für Romantik", 6, 1996, S. 47-90 und Naschert G., *Friedrich Schlegel über Wechselerweis und Ironie (Teil 2)*, in "Athenäum. Jahrbuch für Romantik", 7, 1997, S. 9-34.

[22] Vgl. KFSA 12, 268 f.

[23] Vgl. KFSA 8, 58.

Die mathematische Form hat auch wirklich viel Vorzügliches und wurde als musterhaft mit Recht der Philosophie zur Beachtung angepriesen, indem die Mathematik gerade die Wissenschaft ist, die die größte Bestimmtheit und Klarheit hat, woran die Philosophie immer noch leidet. Jedoch zeigt uns eben Spinoza, daß sie in der Philosophie doch nur von einem beschränkten Gebrauch sein könne, allenfalls nur für einen Teil der angewandten Philosophie passe, wenigstens zur Begründung der ersten Prinzipien gar nicht tauge; denn während keiner die mathematische Methode so streng und in solcher Vollkommenheit ausübte wie er, finden wir doch, daß seine Behauptungen durchaus ganz lose und unbewiesen zusammenhängen.[24]

Statt des organisch-genetischen Zusammenhangs zeigt die mathematische Methode für Schlegel also lediglich die bloße Folge der Sätze. Daher stellt er fest, dass sie entgegen ihrer Absicht "grade die antisystematische" sei.[25] Mit Blick auf die Zeitgenossen heißt es in diesem Sinne in den Athenäums-Fragmenten: "Ein Regiment Soldaten *en parade* ist nach der Denkart mancher Philosophen ein System".[26]

Eng mit der Frage der Ableitbarkeit verbunden ist zudem Schlegels Kritik am starren, fixierenden Wesen von Systemen. Indem Wissen in ein festes System eingeordnet wird, verliere sich dessen lebendige Dynamik. Folglich könne die Wirklichkeit, die "ewig nur werden" und "nie vollendet" sei,[27] nicht ohne Verlust in ein System überführt werden.[28] Daraus folgert Schlegel: "Nicht in den Schriften also und Buchstaben und Systemen ist die Philosophie beschlossen; so eng läßt sich der unendliche Geist nicht fesseln und binden".[29] Und in seinen Notizheften hält er später fest: "Die *systematische Form* ist ohnehin schlechthin verwerflich, weil sie wieder auf den Grundfehler aller φσ<Philosophie> zurückführt nämlich das fixirte ον – die *beharrende Endlichkeit*".[30] Sowohl das "in sich verschlossene[] System der Vernunft, als auch das mit ihm konvergierende System der Natur" versteht Schlegel also "als Prototypen des verdinglichenden, abstrakten" und daher abzulehnenden "Philosophierens".[31]

Schließlich wendet sich Schlegel auch gegen die Forderung der Vollständigkeit: Ein System könne die Komplexität des Wissens niemals vollständig erfassen, denn es "bezeichnet und erfodert im-

[24] KFSA 12, 268.
[25] KFSA 18, 85, Nr. 671.
[26] KFSA 2, 172, Nr. 46.
[27] KFSA 2, 183, Nr. 116.
[28] Vgl. Arndt, 'Friedrich Schlegels dialektischer Systembegriff', zit., S. 295.
[29] KFSA 3, 101. Entsprechend unterscheidet Schlegel auch terminologisch zwischen der Philosophie und bloßen Lehrgebäuden (vgl. z. B. *Der Philosoph Hamann*: KFSA 8, 459).
[30] KFSA 19, 76 f., Nr. 346.
[31] J. Zovko, 'Kritik versus System. Ein ironisches Spiel im Denken Friedrich Schlegels', in Danz, Stolzenberg (Hrsg.), *System und Systemkritik um 1800*, zit., S. 301-310, S. 301.

mer einen *bestimmten* Horicont".[32] Weil jedes System immer nur eine spezifische Perspektive repräsentieren könne, ergeben sich, Schlegel zufolge, notwendig Aspekte, die nicht in das System integriert werden können und folglich außerhalb desselben stehen bleiben.[33] Diese Reste, die Schlegel auch "dunkle Stellen" nennt,[34] führen dazu, dass das System selbst "nicht absolut" sein kann.[35] Im Gegenteil gilt für Schlegel: "Sobald etwas System ist, so ist es nicht absolut",[36] denn das wahrhaft absolute System müsste auch das außerhalb seiner selbst Liegende umfassen, mithin den eigenen Widerspruch, die eigene Negation, oder wie Schlegel es ausdrückt: "Zur Vielseitigkeit gehört nicht allein ein weitumfassendes System, sondern auch Sinn für das Chaos außerhalb desselben".[37]

Gegen jedes der drei eingangs genannten Merkmale eines philosophischen Systems meldet Schlegel also grundlegende Bedenken an. Das durch einen Grundsatz begründete, kohärente und in sich geschlossene Systemmodell, das Reinhold und Fichte entwickelten, kann für Schlegel nicht die angemessene Form lebendigen Philosophierens sein. Ganz allgemein heißt es daher in seinen Notizheften, dass "die absolute φ<Philosophie> *nicht mehr* System sein" könne.[38]

Trotz dieses scheinbar eindeutigen Ergebnisses ist zu berücksichtigen, dass Schlegel das System als Form des Philosophierens keineswegs vollständig ablehnt. Wie bereits gezeigt, wendet er sich lediglich gegen *spezifische* Modelle, denen zufolge das Ganze des Systems aus einer Folge von Sätzen bestehen soll, die vollständig aus einem sich selbst begründenden Prinzip abgeleitet werden müssen. Obwohl Schlegel dieses Systemverständnis kritisiert, darf seine Systemkritik also nicht als Systemlosigkeit missverstanden werden; sein eigenes Denken ist keineswegs unsystematisch. Das zeigt sich

[32] KFSA 18, 102, Nr. 878, Herv. JK.

[33] Expliziert wird dieser Einwand in der *Transcendentalphilosophie*-Vorlesung am Beispiel der Moralphilosophie, von der Schlegel sagt: "Wir müssen uns also auch gegen die Moralisten erklären, die Systeme aufbauen wollen. Es läßt sich die Moral nicht in ein System fassen, weil man doch immer nur eine bestimmte Zahl von Begriffen und Grundsätzen entlehnen könnte" (KFSA 12, 55).

[34] KFSA 2, 236 f., Nr. 384. Vgl. auch: KFSA 18, 80, Nr. 609.

[35] Vgl. Schlegels Notiz: "Fichte's Ich ist συστ<System> sein Nicht Ich χα<Chaos>" (KFSA 18, 265, Nr. 851).

[36] KFSA 12, 5.

[37] KFSA 2, 262, Nr. 55.

[38] KFSA 18, 102, Nr. 878. In der Einleitung zu Schlegels Lessing-Anthologie von 1804 heißt es in einem ganz ähnlichen Sinne: "Mit völligem Rechte daher denken diejenigen, welche den Idealismus festzustellen und zu vervollkommnen, sich bestreben, vor allen Dingen auf die wahrhafte und beste Form desselben. Nur daß sie dieselbe meist auf eine verkehrte Weise, und an einem ganz falschen Orte suchen. – Einige vermeinen die vollkommne Form der Philosophie in der systematischen Einheit zu finden; aber völlig mit Unrecht, denn die Philosophie ist nicht ein äußerliches Werk der Darstellung, sondern ganz nur Geist und Gesinnung" (KFSA 3, 99).

schon daran, dass er den Begriff des ‚Systems' in vielen seiner Briefe, Notizhefte und publizierten Texte häufig und nicht selten in einem durchaus affirmierenden Sinne benutzt.[39] Auch in der Jenaer *Transcendentalphilosophie*-Vorlesung vom Wintersemester 1800/01 wird der Begriff des Öfteren und keineswegs nur kritisch gebraucht. Tatsächlich bezeichnet Schlegel seinen eigenen philosophischen Entwurf der Nachschrift zufolge sogar wiederholt als "System".[40]

Dazu passt, dass Schlegel in Bezug auf sein eigenes Denken schon früh einen expliziten Systemanspruch erhoben hat: "Wenn es einen Kriticismus giebt", so hält er 1796 in seinen Notizheften fest, "so muß es eine ächte Methode und ein ächtes System geben, die unzertrennlich sind. – *System* ist eine durchgängig gegliederte Allheit von wissenschaftl<ichem> Stoff, in durchgehender Wechselwirkung und organischem Zusammenhang".[41] Schlegel geht es also durchaus um eine geordnete Entwicklung und anzustrebende Vollständigkeit des Systems.[42] Er versteht den Begriff ‚System' damit im ursprünglichen Sinne des Wortes als "eine geordnete Zusammenstellung oder Verbindung von Teilen zu einem Ganzen".[43] Seinen eigenen Systemanspruch beschreibt er, wenn er in seinen Heften fordert: "Die φ<Philosophie> muß einmal aufhören κφ-kritische Philosophie> zu sein und συστ<systematisch> werden".[44] Ausgehend davon versteht Schlegel sich – freilich in einem noch zu bestimmenden Sinne – als "Systematiker"[45]: "Meine φ<Philosophie>", schreibt er bereits 1797, "ist ein System von Fragmenten und eine Progreß.<ion> von Projekten".[46]

Damit wird deutlich, dass Schlegel den Anspruch der Systematizität durchaus auch für sein eigenes Denken reklamiert. Seine Systemkritik ist folglich keine Systemlosigkeit.[47] Er fordert nicht

[39] Vgl. KFSA 8, 30. Darauf hat schon Arndt, 'Friedrich Schlegels dialektischer Systembegriff', zit., S. 299 f. aufmerksam gemacht.

[40] Z. B. KFSA 12, 32. Vgl. auch KFSA 12, 29 ff. und 95. Darüber hinaus spricht Schlegel von "unser[m] System", dessen "systematischen Theil[en]" und einer "Systematische[n] Darstellung" seiner eigenen Theorie (ebd., 35 f., 43 und 80).

[41] KFSA 18, 12, Nr. 84.

[42] In diesem Sinne hatte er bereits 1793 in einem Brief an seinen Bruder August Wilhelm "Bestimtheit des Erklärens, Genauigkeit der wissenschaftlichen Bezeichnung", aber auch "Vollständigkeit der Einsicht" und "innre[] Vollendung" als unverzichtbare Merkmale eines Systems bezeichnet (KFSA 23, 143).

[43] Borsche, 'System und Aphorismus', zit., S. 49.

[44] KFSA 18, 90, Nr. 731.

[45] KFSA 18, 97, Nr. 815. Vgl.: "Da ich überall in π<Poesie> und φ<Philosophie> zuerst und aus Instinkt auf das συστ<System> gegangen bin, so bin ich wohl ein Universalsystematiker" (KFSA 18, 38, Nr. 214).

[46] KFSA 18, 100, Nr. 857. Vgl. auch: KFSA 16, 126, Nr. 496.

[47] Vgl. Arndt, der festhält, man könne "Schlegels Vorstellung von Philosophie daher keineswegs als unsystematisch bezeichnen" (Arndt, 'Friedrich Schlegels dialektischer Systembegriff', zit., S. 299).

die Aufgabe des systematischen Anspruchs, aber er bezweifelt, dass ein sich selbst begründendes, geschlossenes und mithin vollständiges System der Philosophie im Sinne Fichtes oder Reinholds möglich sei. Auf der anderen Seite kritisiert Schlegel aber auch antisystematische Positionen wie diejenige Jacobis, die den wissenschaftlichen Anspruch der Philosophie zu Gunsten einer willkürlichen Subjektivität und unmittelbaren Gewissheit preisgeben will.[48] Schlegel selbst nimmt folglich eine interessante Doppelrolle ein: Einerseits gehört er zum Lager derer, die wie Kant, Reinhold und Fichte, mit der Philosophie einen systematischen Anspruch verbinden. Andererseits gehört er mit Jacobi, Novalis und Schleiermacher zu den Kritikern eines allzu starken Systembegriffs. Das 53. Athenäums-Fragment mit seiner auf den ersten Blick paradoxen Forderung einer Verbindung von Systemanspruch und Systemkritik ist also durchaus ernst zu nehmen und kann auf Schlegels eigene Position übertragen werden. Schlegel sucht einen Mittelweg zwischen zwei Extremen und will eine Position entwickeln, die den Systemanspruch im Sinne eines geordneten Ganzen, das auf Vollständigkeit hin ausgerichtet ist, aufrechterhält, ohne sich die genannten Probleme allzu strenger Systeme einzuhandeln. Er zielt folglich auf eine spezifische Konzeption, die systematisch sein soll, ohne selbst System zu sein, oder anders gesagt: "Erst das Arrangement von System und Systemlosigkeit ergibt für Schlegel ein wahres System".[49]

In der Forschung wird gemeinhin die Auffassung vertreten, Schlegel sei hinter der konkreten Umsetzung dieses Anspruchs zurückgeblieben. Wenn überhaupt wird seine Beschäftigung mit den kleinen Formen (Fragment, Gespräch, Charakteristik, Essay usw.) als Versuch gewertet, das gestellte Problem einer Vermittlung von Systemanspruch und Systemkritik zu lösen und "ein System von Fragmenten" zu entwickeln.[50] Im Allgemeinen wird allerdings beklagt, dass Schlegel keine "befriedigende[n] Auskünfte" darüber gegeben habe, wie das Arrangement von System und Systemlosigkeit konkret "beschaffen sein soll".[51] Dabei wird freilich übersehen, dass Schlegel mit seiner Jenaer *Transcendentalphilosophie*-Vorlesung

[48] Vgl. B. Auerochs, '"Religion in Form der Philosophie" Friedrich Schlegels Sicht auf Fichte (1799)', in B. Sandkaulen (Hrsg.), *System und Systemkritik. Beiträge zu einem Grundproblem der klassischen deutschen Philosophie*, Königshausen und Neumann, Würzburg 2006, S. 91-107, S. 103 ff.

[49] Stadler, 'System und Systemlosigkeit. Bemerkungen zu einer Darstellungsform im Umkreis idealistischer Philosophie und frühromantischer Literatur', zit., S. 63 f.

[50] KFSA 2, 176, Nr. 77. Vgl. dazu Behler in KFSA 2, XL.

[51] Stadler, 'System und Systemlosigkeit. Bemerkungen zu einer Darstellungsform im Umkreis idealistischer Philosophie und frühromantischer Literatur', zit., S. 64, ähnlich auch 62.

sehr wohl den Versuch unternommen hat, den eigenen Systemanspruch in einem konkreten philosophischen Entwurf umzusetzen. Entsprechend sind nicht erst die Kölner Vorlesungen von 1803/04 als "erste[s] ‚System' Schlegels" zu betrachten,[52] sondern schon die Jenaer Vorlesungen zur *Transcendentalphilosophie* von 1800/01. Tatsächlich kann sogar die Grundidee dieses Kollegs auf Schlegels Willen zur Systematik zurückgeführt werden, denn ihm liegt die Absicht zu Grunde, die verschiedenen Ansätze und Ideen der Frühzeit in ein geordnetes Ganzes zu überführen.[53] Das Ziel der Vorlesung ist also ohne jeden Zweifel systematisch. Mit ihr hat Schlegel sein der Absicht nach *un*systematisches Denken der Frühzeit erstmals *systematisch* zusammengefasst. Es liegt daher nahe, das spezifische Systemmodell der Vorlesung im Folgenden genauer zu beleuchten.

3. *Das offene System der Transcendentalphilosophie-Vorlesung*

Auf die Frage nach dem System geht Schlegel gleich zu Beginn seiner Vorlesung anlässlich einiger Bemerkungen zur "*Form der Philosophie*" ein. Mit einem bereits zuvor referierten Argument macht er deutlich, dass es ihm nicht um die "Einheit eines Systems" gehe, weil dieses "nicht absolut" sein könne.[54] Da er in diesem Zusammenhang u. a. auf die Frage der "*Grundsätze*" zu sprechen kommt, kann davon ausgegangen werden, dass Schlegel auch hier vor allem an Fichtes Systemmodell denkt. Die eingangs zitierte Bemerkung ist folglich nicht als generelle Absage an den Systemanspruch zu lesen, sondern als Kritik einer spezifischen Systemauffassung. In Abgrenzung von Fichte macht Schlegel deutlich, dass er selbst eine andere Systemkonzeption entwickeln und vertreten möchte. Statt als System bestimmt er die "*Form der Philosophie*" in seiner *Transcendentalphilosophie*-Vorlesung allgemeiner als "*absolute Einheit*" und stellt fest, dass diese eher als "Chaos von Systemen" zu verstehen sei.[55]

Damit wird deutlich, dass Schlegel den Anspruch der Systematizität auch in seiner *Transcendentalphilosophie* nicht aufgibt. Im Gegenteil sagt er schon ganz am Anfang der Vorlesung: "Die Philosophie soll ein Wissen seyn, und zwar ein absolutesWissen;

[52] Vgl. Auerochs, '"Religion in Form der Philosophie" Friedrich Schlegels Sicht auf Fichte (1799)', zit., S. 95.

[53] Zu dieser Vorlesung vgl. J. Korngiebel, *Die Vorlesung als Medium der Kritik. Zu Friedrich Schlegels Jenaer Transcendentalphilosophie (1800/01)*, in "Athenäum. Jahrbuch der Friedrich Schlegel-Gesellschaft", 26, 2016, S. 87-120.

[54] KFSA 12, 5.

[55] KFSA 12, 5.

wir müssen also darnach streben, daß jeder Schritt, den wir thun, *nothwendig sey*, nichts Hypothetisches enthalte".[56] Auch den Anspruch an einen notwendigen Zusammenhang der einzelnen Sätze und Folgerungen lässt Schlegel also keineswegs fallen. Im Gegenteil unterstreicht er sogar ausdrücklich die Forderung, keine hypothetischen Sätze zu akzeptieren. In diesem Sinne hat schon Ernst Behler darauf hingewiesen, dass Schlegel "sein Denken zwar" nicht als "System, wohl aber [als] einen Zusammenhang, d. h. einen transzendentalen Gang" begriffen habe, bei dem "ein Schritt notwendig aus dem anderen" folge.[57]

Das auf diese Weise zu entwickelnde System "soll ein Ganzes der Philosophie darstellen".[58] Es zielt folglich auf "ein Wissen der Totalität", das Schlegel auch mit dem Begriff der "*Ideen*" fasst. Diese sind dem "Wissen von dem Ursprünglichen" entgegengesetzt, das "*Prinzipien*" genannt wird.[59] Obwohl Prinzipien und Ideen Gegensätzliches bezeichnen, bilden sie doch gemeinsam die "*Materie der Philosophie*".[60] Das Ganze des Systems, das "den Prinzipien entgegengesetzt" ist,[61] muss folglich schrittweise aus diesen entwickelt werden. Zu diesem Zweck müssen die Prinzipien genau betrachtet und analysiert werden. Daher sagt Schlegel: "Jedes System fängt mit *Redukzion* und *Analyse* an. Redukzion ist die Auflösung einer Komplexion von Phänomenen in einzelne Phänomene".[62] Der Anfang des Systems liegt folglich nicht in einem oder mehreren unmittelbar gewissen, alles begründenden und absolut geltenden Grundsätzen wie bei Fichte und Reinhold, sondern in der schrittweise erfolgenden Analyse der wechselseitig aufeinander verweisenden Prinzipien, des Bewusstseins und des Unendlichen.[63] Da am Anfang des Systems Reduktion und Analyse stehen, kann Schlegel in Abgrenzung zu anderen Systemkonzeptionen festhalten, dass das "System nicht mit dem *Geiste*", sondern "nur mit dem Buchstaben" anfangen könne.[64] Das bedeutet: Das Ganze des Systems ist nicht schon von Anfang an vorhanden; auch ist es nicht vollständig in den Prinzipien enthalten. Das 'Wissen der Prinzipien' muss vielmehr schrittweise entwickelt und zu einem ‚Wissen der Ideen' fort- und aus-

[56] KFSA 12, 3.
[57] KFSA 8, XX.
[58] KFSA 12, 18.
[59] KFSA 12, 4.
[60] KFSA 12, 5.
[61] KFSA 12, 100.
[62] KFSA 12, 10.
[63] In Abgrenzung zu Fichte sagt Schlegel daher in der *Transcendentalphilosophie*-Vorlesung: "Wir sagen Prinzipien statt *Grundsätze*; denn es könnte ja seyn, daß die Prinzipien nicht *Sätze*, sondern *Fakta* wären" (KFSA 12, 4).
[64] KFSA 12, 9.

gebildet werden. Insofern kann Schlegel sagen, dass "*Kontinuität der Prinzipien und Symmetrie der Ideen*" notwendige "Bedingungen des Systems" seien.[65] Nur beides zusammengenommen ergibt die angestrebte "Einheit".[66] Das vollständige System und mit ihm dessen Begründung steht folglich nicht am Anfang, sondern am Ende des Prozesses, den Schlegel als Philosophie begreift. Es ist dessen Produkt und soll nicht nur das ‚Wissen der Prinzipien', sondern ein vollständig entfaltetes ‚Wissen der Ideen' umfassen.

Schon damit deutet sich an, dass das angestrebte *vollständige* System für Schlegel ein ewig unerreichbares Ziel bleiben muss. Nicht nur ist die Philosophie als Prozess für Schlegel unabschließbar, auch ein vollständiges ‚Wissen der Ideen' ist unmöglich. Folglich muss das zu entwickelnde System notwendigerweise unabschließbar sein. Wie Ernst Behler zusammenfasst, hat Schlegel "systematische Ganzheit und Geschlossenheit" immer als ein "nicht aufzugebendes, freilich auch nie erreichbares Ziel des Wissens" angesehen.[67] Das bedeutet, dass das angestrebte System, Schlegel zufolge, immer unvollendet bleiben muss und demzufolge nur annäherungsweise realisiert werden kann. Deswegen legt er in der *Transcendentalphilosophie*-Vorlesung Wert auf die Feststellung, dass auch "das vollendetste System" immer "nur *Approximazion*", d. h. Annäherung an das nicht erreichbare Ziel der Vollständigkeit sein könne.[68] Dieses auf den ersten Blick ernüchternde Ergebnis versteht Schlegel allerdings keineswegs als Mangel. Es gilt ihm im Gegenteil als Garant der freien Entfaltung des Geistes,[69] weswegen er immer wieder die Notwendigkeit des weiteren Bemühens und Fortschreitens betont – auch und gerade in dem Wissen, dass das letzte Ziel unerreichbar ist.

Die Besonderheit von Schlegels System besteht also darin, dass es prinzipiell unabschließbar und daher entwicklungsoffen ist.[70] Die unendliche Approximation ergibt sich dabei auch aus der jeweiligen Kritik konkreter philosophischer Systeme, wie Schlegel sie in der Vorlesung beispielhaft in seiner *Geschichte des Bewusstseins* vorführt. Dort folgen auf die Epoche der "*Empfindung*", "*Anschauung*" und "*Vorstellung*", die Schlegel als "Epochen des Irrthums" charakterisiert,[71] die

[65] KFSA 12, 18 und 21.

[66] KFSA 12, 21.

[67] E. Behler, *Zum Verhältnis von Hegel und Friedrich Schlegel in der Theorie der Unendlichkeit*, in *Ernst Behler. Studien zur Romantik und zur idealistischen Philosophie*, Bd. 2, F. Schöningh, Paderborn u. a. 1993, S. 119-142, S. 140.

[68] KFSA 12, 10.

[69] Vgl. KFSA 12, 93 und 95.

[70] "Jedes System" so heißt es in Schlegels Notizheften "wächst nur aus Fragmenten" (KFSA 16, 126, Nr. 496) und kann – so könnte man ergänzen – daher niemals mehr sein als Fragment.

[71] KFSA 12, 11 f.

Epochen der "*Einsicht*", der "*Vernunft*" und des "*Verstandes*", denen als "Epochen der Wahrheit" der "*Dogmatismus*", "*Realismus*" und "*Idealismus*" zugeordnet ist.[72] Gerade im Streit dieser entgegengesetzten Systeme liegt das Movens der weiteren Entwicklung begründet. Indem sich "Dogmatismus" und "Realismus" gegenseitig widersprechen, wirken sie wechselweise als Korrektiv aufeinander und bringen den "Idealismus" hervor. Die Pluralität von Systemen versteht Schlegel dabei als historische Abfolge konkreter philosophischer Lehrgebäude und Denkweisen.[73] Schon ab Mitte der 1790er Jahre verwendet er den Begriff ‚systematisch' daher gleichbedeutend mit ‚historisch'[74] und stellt fest: "Alles συστ<System> ist Hist<orisch> und umgekehrt".[75] Das System, das Schlegel vorschwebt,[76] muss folglich genau betrachtet als ein historisch sich vollziehendes ‚System von Systemen' begriffen werden, oder wie Schlegel selbst sagt: ein "Chaos von Systemen".[77] Gerade in der unabschließbaren Entwicklung immer neuer Systementwürfe besteht die unendliche Progression der Philosophie: "Die Idee der Philosophie ist nur durch eine unendliche Progression von Systemen zu erreichen. Ihre Form ist ein Kreislauf".[78]

Der Indikator dieses ewigen Fortschreitens ist, Schlegel zufolge, die wachsende Kohärenz. Der Begriff des Systems wird daher in der Vorlesung mit den Worten beschrieben: "Man kann nichts weiter sagen, als: *es ist ein wissenschaftliches Ganze, das in sich vollendet ist*".[79] Obwohl das System keineswegs als Ganzes vollendet und absolut sein kann, ist es doch "in sich vollendet", d. h. die Widersprüche, die sich zwischen den verschiedenen Teilsystemen ergeben, werden nach und nach überwunden, sodass ein immer kohärenteres Ganzes entsteht.[80] Dieses Verfahren bietet nicht nur die Möglichkeit, die sich widersprechenden Lehr- und Denkgebäu-

[72] KFSA 12, 12 f.

[73] Das zeigt nicht nur Schlegels Erörterung verschiedener "Moralsysteme" (KFSA 12, 67 f.), sondern auch seine Diskussion der Systeme Fichtes und Spinozas, von denen ausgehend er seinen eigenen Standpunkt entwickelt (KFSA 12, 29 f.).

[74] Vgl. z. B. KFSA 18, 32, Nr. 141.

[75] KFSA 18, 85, Nr. 671.

[76] Vgl. KFSA 18, 5, Nr. 14.

[77] KFSA 12, 5. "In diesem Sinne ist 'System' für Schlegel weder bloß eine regulative Idee, wie bei Kant, noch überhaupt nur ein Prinzip oder Grund(satz), das oder der vom begrifflichen Denken notwendig verfehlt wird, sondern eine Prozeßtotalität, die sich in […] ständig […] neuen systematischen Zuständen organisiert" (Arndt, 'Friedrich Schlegels dialektischer Systembegriff', zit., S. 296).

[78] KFSA 12, 10.

[79] KFSA 12, 18.

[80] "Der Sinn des Philosophierens besteht folglich in der symphilosophierenden Prüfung und der kritischen Integration der bestehenden Gedankenentwürfe in eine organische Ganzheit, was der progressiven Idee der romantischen Synthese entspricht, nämlich aus einer Vielzahl der kongruierenden Fragmente ein organisches Gefüge zu bilden" (Zovko, 'Kritik versus System. Ein ironisches Spiel im Denken Friedrich Schlegels', zit., S. 309).

de dialektisch miteinander zu vermitteln. Es ermöglicht auch die Integration des Gegensatzes des gesamten Systems. Schlegels Systemmodell bietet folglich die Möglichkeit, den je eigenen Gegensatz in das System zu integrieren, sodass außerhalb des Systems kein ‚Rest' entsteht. Indem sich das System immer wieder selbst negiert und den eigenen Gegensatz in sich aufnimmt, weist es stets über sich hinaus und erreicht so eine neue, höhere Stufe.[81] Da sich mit jeder neuen Stufe aber zugleich neue Negationen ergeben, gelingt es nie, die Negation *vollständig* zu überwinden und den außerhalb des Systems liegenden Rest ausnahmslos in das System zu integrieren. Statt ein absolutes Wissen zu erreichen bleibt also nur ein stetiger Zuwachs an Wahrscheinlichkeit. Auch für Schlegels eigenen Systementwurf gilt daher, was er hinsichtlich anderer Systemmodelle festhält: Obwohl das System über einen immer größer werdenden Grad an Kohärenz verfügt, bleibt es doch letztlich prinzipiell unabschließbar und somit notwendigerweise entwicklungsoffen.[82]

Schlegels Systemmodell ist folglich – wie die Wirklichkeit, die es abbilden soll – prinzipiell offen, unabgeschlossen und ewig im Werden.[83] Es kann, wie jedes andere System, immer "nur Approximation sein".[84] Das schließt die Einsicht ein, dass auch die höchste verfügbare Stufe des Systems immer nur relative Geltung für sich in Anspruch nehmen kann, d. h. sie gilt prinzipiell unter Vorbehalt und nur so lange bis sie durch einen neuen, kohärenteren Entwurf abgelöst wird. Die Wahrheit und mit ihr "das ganze System der Philosophie", so betont Schlegel in seiner Vorlesung immer wieder, ist daher notwendigerweise "relativ".[85] Allerdings denkt Schlegel diese Relativität nicht im Sinne eines falsch verstandenen *anything goes* als *Neben*einander gleichwertiger Optionen, sondern als historisches *Nach*einander sich gegenseitig ablösender Stufen, wobei der immanente Selbstwiderspruch das Kriterium der Überwindung ist. Relativität im Sinne Schlegels muss also als Möglichkeit der Revi-

[81] "Anders gesagt: Das System selbst ist so beschaffen, daß es seine jeweiligen Zustände überschreitet und damit die jeweilige Systematizität aus sich selbst heraus negiert. Systemlosigkeit als Negation des Systems ist damit Prozeßmoment des Systems selbst" (Arndt, 'Friedrich Schlegels dialektischer Systembegriff', zit., S. 296).

[82] "Ein solches immer wieder zu relativierendes System ist nie wirklich System, kommt nie zum Abschluß, bleibt unendlich perfektibel, bewegt sich zwischen Einheit und Fülle" (Frischmann, 'Der philosophische Beitrag der deutschen Frühromantik und Hölderlins', zit., S. 343).

[83] Wie Bärbel Frischmann bemerkt, lässt Schlegel "die Idee von Systematizität" also nicht "überhaupt fallen", sondern entwickelt "einen Theorietyp, der selbst entwicklungsfähig ist" (Frischmann, 'Der philosophische Beitrag der deutschen Frühromantik und Hölderlins', zit., S. 342).

[84] KFSA 18, 413, Nr. 1106 auch 417, Nr. 1149.

[85] KFSA 12, 95. Vgl. auch: "*Absolute Wahrheit kann nicht zugegeben werden*" (KFSA 12, 93).

sion verstanden werden: "Keine Philosophie", so hält er in seiner Vorlesung fest, kann "als die Wahrheit (nämlich absolute) angesehen werden" – das gilt auch für Schlegels eigenen Standpunkt.[86]

Ein weiterer Grund dafür, dass das System nie als absolut betrachtet werden kann, liegt darin, dass es sich der adäquaten Darstellung stets entzieht: Auch die "Mittheilbarkeit des wahren Systems kann nur beschränkt seyn",[87] denn "Alles was man in Sätze und Schlüsse bringt, ist nur Buchstabe, und der wird und muß vorübergehen, *indem nur der Geist bleibt*".[88] So führt die Frage nach dem System letztlich auf das für Schlegel so zentrale Problem, wie die Philosophie im Sinne eines lebendigen, entwicklungsoffenen Prozesses überhaupt adäquat dargestellt werden kann. Obwohl dieser Frage hier nicht weiter nachgegangen werden kann, ist doch festzuhalten, dass Schlegel den Systemmodellen Fichtes und Spinozas auch in dieser Hinsicht eine Absage erteilt.[89] Für Schlegel ist, wie Ulrich Stadler es ausgedrückt hat, die "Begrenztheit eines jeden Systems" nur "durch eine Koppelung von Philosophie und Poesie" aufzuheben,[90] denn nur diese erlaubt es, den offenen, progressiven Charakter der Philosophie zumindest annäherungsweise darzustellen.[91] Entsprechend zielt auch Schlegels *Transcendentalphilosophie*-Vorlesung in ihrem letzten Abschnitt auf eine *Philosophie der Philosophie*, in der Philosophie und Poesie miteinander verbunden werden sollen.

Schlegels eigenes System muss folglich auch in dieser Hinsicht als Gegenentwurf zu den ‚klassischen' Systemmodellen seiner Zeit verstanden werden. Aufgrund der "unendlich zyklische[n] Progressivität"[92] handelt es sich um ein ‚offenes' bzw. ‚relatives System im Werden',[93] das in der Geschichte als dem unendlichen Leben des Geistes seinen Ausdruck findet. Entgegen der

[86] KFSA 12, 94.

[87] KFSA 18, 519, Nr. 20.

[88] KFSA 12, 95.

[89] In Abgrenzung dazu sagt Schlegel in seinen Vorlesungen über Platon: "Wenn der Philosoph eine bestimmte Quantität von Wahrheit vorzutragen hat, kann er immer die Form eines geschlossenen Systems, einer systematischen Abhandlung, eines systematischen Lehrbuches wählen. Hat er aber mehr zu sagen, als in diese Form sich bringen läßt, so kann er nur suchen, in den Gang und die Entwicklung und Darstellung seiner Ideen jene eigentümliche Einheit zu bringen, die den objektiven Wert der Platonischen Werke ausmacht" (KFSA 11, 119).

[90] Stadler, 'System und Systemlosigkeit. Bemerkungen zu einer Darstellungsform im Umkreis idealistischer Philosophie und frühromantischer Literatur', zit., S. 64.

[91] In seinen Notizheften stellt Schlegel daher in Abgrenzung zu Spinoza fest: "Ein φ<philosophisches> System hat mehr Aehnlichkeit mit einem π<poetischen> und Hist<orischen> System, als mit einem *mathematischen*, was man immer *ausschließend* für systematisch hielt" (KFSA 18, 84, Nr. 650).

[92] Vgl. Arndt, 'Friedrich Schlegels dialektischer Systembegriff', zit., S. 294 f.

[93] Deshalb sagt Schlegel auch: "Die συστ<systematische> φ<Philosophie> sollte die *relative* φ<Philosophie> heißen" (KFSA 18, 131, Nr. 113).

Auffassung, dass Schlegel die spezifische Idee einer Verbindung von System und Systemlosigkeit nirgends eingehend dargestellt habe, ist also festzuhalten, dass er diesen konkreten Anspruch in seiner Jenaer *Transcendentalphilosophie* von 1800/01 erstmals ausführlich umzusetzen versuchte. Mit ihr löst Schlegel die Aufgabe, Systemanspruch und Systemkritik bzw. System und Systemlosigkeit fruchtbar miteinander zu verbinden. Schlegels *Transcendentalphilosophie*-Vorlesung ist systematisch ohne strenges System zu sein.

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The Romantic Development of Classical German Philosophy: From Post-Kantianism to Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Rancière

di Paul Hamilton*

ABSTRACT
Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Rancière belong to a number philosophers who recently have tried to revive a radical, even revolutionary politics by following post-Kantians in re-conceiving Kant's idea of the aesthetic in a Romantic vein. This chapter argues that in the process they get us to understand classical German philosophy better through their exploitation of its trademark but crucially unstable construction of a potentially open-ended community of aesthetic judgements. Political reconsideration of the aesthetic is achieved not just through radicalizing Kant's idea of the "sublime", as Lyotard attempted some years ago, but by thinking 'dissensus' or 'bare life', apparently aesthetic categories facilitating a kind of suspension of ideas of law, supposedly essential to political theory, and modelling a new kind of political community. In the process, they define their position through disagreeing with the major critic of Romantic aesthetics and politics, Carl Schmitt.

KEYWORDS
Aesthetic, Romanticism, Community, Law, Politics

> Friedrich Schlegel's endeavours in political philosophy are entirely lacking in political originality.[1]
>
> Carl Schmitt

1. *Introduction: the Kantian Shadow*

This paper looks briefly at the way two recent theorists, Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Rancière, try to conceive of a new politics. My argument is that they follow post-Kantians in re-conceiving Kant's idea of the aesthetic in a Romantic vein. In the process they get us to understand classical German philosophy better through its trademark construction of the aesthetic. This is achieved not just

* Queen Mary University of London (UK), p.w.a.hamilton@qmul.ac.uk

[1] C. Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, trans. by G. Oakes, MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 1986, p. 141.

through developing Kant's idea of the 'sublime', as the post-Kantians did, and Lyotard took up some years ago, but through the very idea of aesthetic difference. In the process, they define their position through disagreeing with the major critic of the Romantic aesthetic, Carl Schmitt.

The key questions raised by this discussion are as follows. Does the idea of the aesthetic originating in Kant constitute an alternative or exception to an otherwise law-bound conception of ourselves and the world? Or does it merely shadow and give us a unique feeling for these necessary constraints, and instead of escaping them only lets us experience them adjacently to being subject to them? If the former, does the aesthetic set standards of creativity calling for a transforming translation of its insights into non-aesthetic discourse? This last view would allow the aesthetic to develop another Kantian idea that it is characterised by a kind of genius whose artistic achievement is to be nature's mouthpiece. Extreme singularity is legitimised by having been a mask for life itself – whether as Marx's 'species-being' or Nietzsche's 'Dionysus' or later historicized representations of ourselves in timely shapes and ways – nature or 'mere life', but in the service of the living (*das bloße Leben… um des lebendigen willen*), Benjamin would later put it.[2] There is an inherently political charge to this notion of the disbursement of aesthetic privilege to other discourses as historical circumstances change: aesthetic sensibility metamorphoses into the discourses and practices which best represent distinctively human creativity at different times.

Let me run through this first premise again, revealing its political inflection more polemically. Aesthetic conceptions of the individual and society more generous than the prescriptions of the positive laws or constitution of the state imply that it is possible to construct another culture of self-understanding. We experience our own forms of experience in certain ways demanding an expressive vocabulary, one which 'symbolizes' morality or science. But we still demand agreement about the construction of this culture, its *Bildung*; it has to represent a 'common sense' formative of our understanding of what it is like to have the obligations and perceptions we have. While Kant originally confined this creativity to communicating reflections on typical human experience, subsequent Romantic thinkers were interested in creative departures from Kantian prescription this pleasurable experience might confirm.

[2] W. Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence', in *Selected Writings 1913-26* (hereafter, *SW*), ed. by M. Bullock and M.W. Jennings, Belknap Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 1997, 1. 250; *Gesammelte Schriften* (hereafter, *GW*), ed. by R. Tiedemann and H. Schweppenhäuser, 7 voll., Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1974, 1. 200.

For those Romantics, then, aesthetic exception would turn out to be at the centre of ways of making credible new versions of our common interest; and aesthetic expression would initiate creative thinking outside that cognitive or ethical box whose coherence Kant held must be reflected in aesthetics in order to be communicable. The post-Kantian aesthetic becomes a search for the political implications of finding 'common sense' in activities which are far from being avowedly aesthetic contributions to traditional *Bildung*. Marx's mythical (as opposed to his doctrinaire) effort is to relocate in labour the once exclusively aesthetic experience of 'the laws of beauty' by completely reconceiving the political order. Much more modest versions of this are alive now, and, from Habermas to Rancière, they to some degree revisit the Romantic beginnings of this aesthetic politics and try to understand its current attractiveness in relation to those origins.

This outcome of Kantian aesthetics needs refining on, though, if we are to understand its recent influence. Once the aesthetic example has been experienced, we have access to a model for the extra-legal, extra-conceptual production of what we have in common. Kant thought that this 'common sense' was a new universal, its plausibility founded on its communicability – its power to command consensus. For Hannah Arendt, this immediately turned aesthetic judgement into a kind of political judgement, something to be negotiated. Later twentieth-century theorists, following post-Kantians, question the Kantian assumption that ties aesthetic legitimacy to consensus or a quasi-legalistic thinking, conceptual, ethical or conventionally political. Kant seems to rule out of court any advantage which aesthetic diversity might have gained over legalism. Experience of the human originally outside concepts begins, as Kant saw, with the singular. Aesthetic and historical judgements cannot be generalised; they give us rationalizations after the fact, not predictions of what the facts will be. Each work of art and historical event is unique. We only get a sense of un-conceptualised nature through a sense of the contingency of our understanding of it. And that is given to us in aesthetic and teleological judgements. We can think the idea that nature might not have accommodated our understanding, although we are necessarily required to assume the opposite, judging nature to have bound itself together systematically as if in order to make possible our experience of it. We grasp the felicity of this accommodation through the aesthetic pleasure we enjoy in the collaboration of our faculties irrespective of the experience this collaboration makes possible. The pleasure is different each time.

But after Kant it has been argued that to make this singular experience plural, agreement – the establishing of consensus – may not be necessary. Indeed, if the defining difference between aesthetic reflection and scientific determinations or ethical imperatives is to be preserved, a disruptive pluralism must be sought.[3] Kant's aesthetic shadows the epistemological and ethical status quo, the logically necessary universality of concept and the ethically obligatory universality of moral imperative. But post-Kantians from the young Schelling, Hölderlin, Kleist, Hegel and Novalis, through to Friedrich Schlegel concocting sketches of a German constitution for Metternich at the Congress of Vienna and Adam Müller's dialectics, use the aesthetic as a licence to re-imagine what makes up agreement. Aesthetic judgements are not themselves exemplary agreements; they are contested pictures of what such agreement might be. Post-Kantians and recent theory recover conflicted notions of unity and integrity within aesthetic works, models much more various and hybrid than are obviously given in the philosophical licence Kant issues to aesthetic judgement. The claim that we can translate these newly imagined integrities into new political solutions is the conclusion of the post-Kantian politicizing of the aesthetic.

How does the Romantic, post-Revolutionary adventure in political aesthetics look now? Carl Schmitt's attack on 'political romanticism' was embarrassingly in line with his later fascist sympathies. But near contemporary theorists are not bound by Schmitt's terms of reference. The effect of the return on politics of a politicized aesthetics has interested, among many, Habermas, Derrida, Lyotard, Nancy, Rancière, and Agamben. All casually but with striking consistency take their bearings from the post-Kantian speculative environment. I want to use the more recent figures of Agamben and Rancière to resume this movement.

2. *Walter Benjamin and Giorgio Agamben*

Agamben and others, following Adorno's and Horkheimer's claim that the Shoah discredited the enlightenment tradition out of which it arguably emerged, take their critique of 'reason' still further. Adorno and Horkheimer regarded the 'final solution' as confirming reason's primarily instrumental tendency. No justifica-

[3] Rancière even develops post-Kantian "dissensus" into "confusion", integrating Baumgarten's own rehabilitation of "the sensible as 'confused idea'" into his own politicised understanding of the connection between aesthetics and what is not thought in *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, trans. by D. Keates and J. Swenson, Polity Press, Cambridge 2009, p, 6.

tion could any longer be found for extolling as paradigmatically human the activity of reason if it led to genocide. The enlightened domination of natural violence produced a matching violence confirming its dialectical implication in rather than separation from the brutish oppression it was intended to surpass. But Adorno continually sought out other forms of thinking which might not entail this dreadful convergence. His principal recourse was to the aesthetic, a negative thinking, the trademark non-identity of whose symbols with real things created a freedom in which we could at least think the absence of what our corrupted systems of ratiocination could not supply. For Agamben and Rancière, though, even that asymmetry must mime the totalitarianism to which it supposedly provided an exception. The exception appears still defined by the legitimacy of the system which excludes it. Even, thinks Rancière, if we rid ourselves of an instrumental ideal, Schiller's Kantian aesthetic education still perpetuates the "modern madness of the very idea of a self-emancipation of mankind's humanity and its inevitable and interminable termination in the death camps".[4] An alternative must be conjured up in order to escape the terrifying complicity of law with its exceptions: not antinomianism *tout court* (that kind of nonsense of the 'sacred', at once totally powerful and totally vulnerable) but a law whose deference to equity lets it escape the violence of universalism. Comparably, Agamben thinks Kant's categorical imperative, or a theory of duty for duty's sake irrespective of particular content, is precisely what has to be given up in order to imagine a politics "freed from every ban". But a 'bare life' non-identical with any conceptualization of it, must surreptitiously support the totalitarianism Adorno wants it to resist if it remains merely the exception to juridical thinking and not something "in itself", something like Walter Benjamin's "*bloße Leben*".[5]

It was well before the Shoah, in 1921, that Benjamin interested himself in this problem and began to integrate it with the questions he was to ask consistently throughout his subsequent philosophy. It is Benjamin rather than Adorno who is most useful for Agamben and who makes Agamben's often condensed thinking more approachable. Benjamin's *Critique of Violence* (*Zur Kritik der Gewalt)* is quick to see the connection between the power which institutes law and the power which law administers. The largely mythic justification of legal violence "shows itself fundamentally identical with

[4] J. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, with an afterword by S. Žižek, trans. with an introd. by G. Rockhill, Continuum, London 2004, p. 29.

[5] W. Benjamin, *SW* 1.251; *GW* II.1. 201-2; G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by D. Heller-Roazen, Stanford University Press, Stanford (CA) 1998, pp. 59, 55.

all legal violence (*Rechtsgewalt*)".[6] Benjamin's search for an escape from this conflation of the justifying ground and the application of *Gewalt* [*Gewalt*'s primary meaning is 'power', and in combination or compound nouns it has the meaning of 'violent'][7] are driven by his desire to show the possibility of a revolutionary *Gewalt*. Both 'natural' and 'positive' law offer no way out, but stage the same collaboration between ends and means from different directions. Their "common basic dogma" reciprocates violence with violence in a circular logic Benjamin tries to break.[8] To do this, to discover a *Gewalt* outside law as such, and so genuinely revolutionary, he must call on a theological language (as he so often does). 'Mere life' or 'life itself', the apparent exception to our legally bound existence but still a category we all share, is bloodied by myths instituting legality. By contrast, divine power (*die göttliche reine Gewalt über alles Leben*) rules this else diminishing and demeaning level of existence, "for the sake of the living".[9] As so often with Benjamin, a revolutionary re-thinking of what we are demands the theological imagining of "the abolition of state power"; but, tantalizingly, this is a speculation never allowed to fall in with an actual myth which would only establish 'bastardized' (*bastardierte*) legal versions of this ultimate authenticity. It always remains 'sign', 'seal' but never 'means' (*Mittel*).[10]

This messianic Benjamin, it should be remembered, though, co-exists elsewhere in later texts with the Benjamin who, like his friend Brecht, starts "not from the good old things but from the new bad ones". This would be to seek in present interventions ways of alienating legal procedures of all kinds, to find practices that sorted out their own way of speaking against law, (*ein Wort gegen das Recht sich von selbst erledigt*[11]) – jurisprudential, political, aesthetic – in order to set in motion new orders of democracy, a new division or distribution of sensitivity (*partage du sensible*) as Jacques Rancière would call it – one, that is, not in hock to traditional discursive privilege when speaking freedom or fulfilment. As in Benjamin's doctorate on post-Kantian Jena poetology, published a year earlier, an originally aesthetic creative fiat finds its idea in subsequent prose extensions, very much in the manner of Friedrich Schlegel's and

[6] W. Benjamin, *SW* 1.249; *GW* II.1.199.

[7] See A. Haverkamp, *How to Take it (and Do the Right Thing): Violence and the Mournful Mind in Benjamin's* Critique of Violence, in "Cardozo Law Review", 13, 1991-1992, p. 1159; Id., *Anagrammatics of Violence: The Benjaminian Ground of Homo Sacer*, in "Cardozo Law Review", 26, 2004-2005, p. 995.

[8] W. Benjamin, *SW* I. 137; *GS* II. 1. 180.

[9] W. Benjamin, *SW* I. 250; *GS* II. 1. 200.

[10] W. Benjamin, *SW* I. 252; *GS* II. 1. 202.

[11] W. Benjamin, *GW* II. 1. 202.

Novalis's expansions of Kant's aesthetic.[12] To produce the original example again in prosaic or secular discourse has a transgressive force which, paradoxically, is the way to re-experience the full creative force of the aesthetic or divine original. So the idea of *Gewalt* would perhaps be a similarly collaborative effort in which the divine (no more sacred than aesthetic) motivation continues to work outside 'mythic' versions of justice in the service of life itself? Aesthetic reproducibility, as we know from his later work, means for Benjamin not art's power to reproduce the world but art's power to reproduce itself in non-aesthetic discourses.

How do we de-legitimize systems in order to engage with values outside current ideas of law and justice? To want to do this presupposes to begin with the revolutionary confidence of a Benjamin. It's easy to see that the expansion of politics to include non-institutional life might easily cease to be what it usually claims to be – a way of resisting political institutions with a new agenda – and become instead a kind of totalitarianism. The relocation of the grounds or political legitimacy to the community, say, can produce either an increase in democracy through a kind of communitarianism or a police state: either its increased representation of constituencies and interests remedies deficiencies in the scope of existing political institutions, or else the sway of politics is inappropriately extended to aspects of life we prefer to escape political regulation. The provocation in Agamben and others is to keep these differences potentially indistinguishable. Provided communitarianism connects itself with a kind of politics or aspires to re-found political legitimacy, it becomes progressively more difficult to see what might be excluded from politics. And then the 'big brother' society looms, one in which everything is fair game for state surveillance and scrutiny, one where there is no political difference between public and private, and, as a result, we see what Agamben names "the curious contiguity between democracy and totalitarianism". Ethnicity, leisure activities, so-called spiritual life, what Agamben quotes Karl Löwith as calling "seemingly neutral domains of life", are all politicized.[13]

The young Marx used the Romantics principally to show that if the idea of the free individual was kept as abstract as Kant's, then a politics representing it would ignore people's interests. It would support a political economy which, by professedly dealing in abstract human rights, actually kept the material, lived life of the underclass off the political agenda. As an exception to matters

[12] W. Benjamin, *The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism*, in *SW* 1. 116-201; *GS* 1.1 11-112.

[13] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, cit., pp. 120-121.

for political debate, the life of the individual as opposed to the political subject could be surreptitiously controlled. That life would be indirectly policed by the capitalist economy which ignored its claims. The draining of particular content required to produce the Kantian subject under the law, or what we universally shared, was thus, in Marx's view, a way of ensuring that the exception to this abstraction would be policed by other means, not that it would be accorded a contrasting freedom. All material resistance outside of that abstract jurisdiction would be controlled by a free market whose un-prescribed, anarchical force would be adequate to any aspect of private life. Anything, in other words, could be commodified and thus kept within the economy of capitalist law and its exception. The exception became the fetish of the law it notionally escaped. This logic worked in the reverse direction too. For Marx, aesthetic experience would only come into its own when embodied in social experience and scientific knowledge. Otherwise, emancipated from the division of labour, it ceased to play any part in human life at all. It is only "in speaking of labour, one is dealing immediately with man himself".[14] But for Marx, of course, since the modern subject had become alienated from his or her labour under capitalism, things had to change for this to be true.

Like Hegel, the formative critic of Kantian abstraction for Marx, Agamben thinks that Kant's categorical imperative is empty of content by definition. That is the key to the universality of its application and produces, in Agamben's view, a Kafkaesque kind of world in which, because the law is devoid of specific content but remains binding in virtue of its form, no *particular* interest is ever legal and can be ruled against in virtue of just that particularity.[15] Anything, any form of individuality, can be a reason for prosecution. After the trial the camps are waiting just round the corner, and there is one for each of us. Hegel in the section on "Absolute Freedom and Terror" in his *Phänomenologie*, calls this "the sheer terror of the negative that contains nothing positive, nothing that fills it with a content". Its executions are therefore of things of utter insignificance, and are like "cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water".[16] Kant offered various reformulations of the categorical imperative, and some, like the "Kingdom of ends", seem to have a distinctive political content, a republican one. Much recent criticism of him has argued that his philosophy

[14] K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), in *Early Writings*, intr. by L. Colletti, trans. by G. Benton and R. Livingstone Penguin, Harmondsworth 1974, p. 333.

[15] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, cit., pp. 52-53.

[16] G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller, analysis and foreword by J.N. Findlay Clarendon Press, Oxford 1977, secs. 594, 590.

is far more embedded in anthropological considerations than the interpretation of him as a pure formalist allows. At all events, my point is only that the antinomy of law that Kant isolated, whereby the law is as much defined by the (terroristic) way it can legislate for its exceptions as it is by compelling orthodox observance, provoked a strong reaction through to Marx. The Romanticism of post-Kantian philosophy had already questioned the sufficiency of this antinomy, and that helped Marx too. That is, the question was asked by Schelling, Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis and others: is the human being exhaustively defined by its rational observance of law and its irrational contravention of law? If the answer is no, then within Romanticism exists a prototype of that anxious resistance to the juridical model which has so exercised continental philosophers in the last and present century.

3. *Carl Schmitt's Attack On 'Political Romanticism'*

For Carl Schmitt, scourge of 'political romanticism', in place of a mature acceptance that the concept of law depended on the sovereignty which authorised the exception as much as the application of the law, arose a kind of decisionism. Romantics like Schlegel and Adam Müller indulged a self-congratulatory vacillation, flaunting a sense of existing in excess of subsumption under any law. Even when they acknowledged legislation or slipped obediently under a concept, this was an ironic gesture, a feigned observance whose conspicuous falsity testified to an opposing unmanageability. This recalcitrance indicated an inexhaustible Romantic subjectivity which rendered every application of any law, whether legal, conceptual or moral, simply an occasion for our ironic acceptance or non-acceptance of it. Like the God of Malebranche, the Romantics suffered laws to apply to their world rather than being bound by them. Laws reflected back to them their own powers of comprehension and legislation from a world which was their construction. Their veto, provided they were creative enough, was always there for them to exercise. But even their compliance with the law was in effect a fiat of its own.

The quasi-theological legitimizing of law Schmitt required was the opposite of the assumption of divine creative status he attributed to the hubristic Romantic. To decide what is to count as the exception to law, and so, Agamben would hasten to add, to continue the exercise of law by other means, is like a miracle. Since there is no God, it is the sovereign position that remains crucial. By linking

the legitimacy of law to the *power* to decide on what has to count as an exception, Schmitt leaves our existence entirely accounted for within the political state mapped out by the observance of law and its exceptions. The only way of thinking outside the law is the state of emergency, when the law is suspended in its own interests.

Agamben, though, is assiduous in trying to reawaken a sense of what has been lost by this conflation of the laws of the state and its justification. First of all, in *Homo Sacer*, he showed that the binding of the power to authorise law to its actual execution creates the paradox of the exceptional person caught up or living in this paradox. This would be the person who, embodying the life supposedly giving rise to the need for the law, is never subject to the law. The law is always posterior to the value they represent. Equally, this person, since their value is never different from the enforcement of law, is still subject to the force of law but without all the legal niceties, checks and balances. They are subject, paraphrasing Hegel, to force without understanding. This paradox becomes particularly obvious when a state of emergency is declared. The exception is then publicly avowed to be the rule. We have the spectacle of people who are outlawed being, for that reason, subject to the strictest jurisdiction, confined without trial or appeal, treated, Agamben argues, as if they were 'sacred', both legally untouchable and fair game for any penalty the law can devise.

The loss in this dilemma is, Agamben thinks, the loss of a 'politics'. With Guantanamo Bay in mind, he claims that "At the very moment when it would like to give lessons in democracy to different traditions and cultures, the political culture of the West does not realise that it has entirely lost its canon".[17] This 'canon' arises, then, from the ability to maintain a separation between law or the State and its justification: to retain a sense of the value of life, its *zoe*, over and above its assimilation to a political or cultural system. This, in Kant's terms, would be the unthinkable nature contingently not necessarily related to our understanding – the nature of a Hölderlin or a Wordsworth. For the Guantanamo apologist, to treat someone as existing outside the law can only mean to treat them as an outlaw. By making them unaccountable to the law we license ourselves to inflict on this person all the penalties of the law without due legal process. The old logic of the *homo sacer* gets repeated. Both modes of thinking appear to require "the ruling out of a sphere of human action that is entirely removed from law".[18] We

[17] G. Agamben, *State of Exception*, translated by K. Attell, Chicago University Press, Chicago 2005, p. 18.

[18] Agamben, *State of Exception*, cit., p. 11.

encounter the paradoxical outlawing of stances outside the law. No "political unconscious", to appropriate Jameson's term, is credible. Rancière, in Romantic idiom, will approach this political problem via "the aesthetic unconscious".[19]

Schmitt thinks that the attempt to get out from under the paradigm of law and its sovereignty is to engage in a language-game which has nothing to do with politics. As Tracy B. Stroub puts it baldly, "Political romanticism is at the root of what Schmitt sees as the liberal tendency to substitute perpetual discussion for the political".[20] He argues in exactly the opposite direction from Agamben and the Romantics who, as Habermas acknowledged later in his version of the give and take of communication, believed the play of inviolable reserve and what is contrastingly negotiable to be the very stuff of politics. This is Schlegel's *Gespräch*, inadequately translated as "conversation", which, expanding on Kant's *sensus communis*, balances the powers of different discourses in an unprescripted, un-hierarchical exchange of views. Schmitt calls it "the name for a special kind of romantic productivity that takes any occasion for a sociable 'play with words'".[21] The conversational model, which Schmitt locates in Schlegel and Müller, actually goes back to Shaftesbury who, too, regarded our original constitution as dual, and our self-knowledge as a "gymnastic method of soliloquy", a discipline of "self-study and inward converse".[22] Shaftesbury's view is, in turn, a dramatically energised version of that "opinion" which empiricists from Locke to Hume thought the basis of political legitimacy. Schmitt, though, sees here only laziness and abdication of political responsibility. The idea that the notion of the "sociable" which politics should perpetuate is something learned and updated from extra-political authority which, if not acknowledged, might presume over politics would not make sense to him. A politics heeding the Romantic sirens would simply have ceded its identity. The idea that politics might be formed of a tense but productive interchange between a fixed state and a conversational society again is nothing but the solvent of politics, its dissolution. In *The Concept of the Political* he is quite clear that 'the concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political'. Consequently,

[19] See J. Rancière, *The Aesthetic Unconscious*, and also his remarks on Schelling in *Le partage du sensible: esthétique et politique*, La fabrique éditions, Paris 2000, p. 32.

[20] C. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans., introd. and notes by G. Schwab, Chicago University Press, Chicago 2007, p. xiv.

[21] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, cit., p. 139.

[22] A.A. Cooper, *Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by L.E. Klein, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, pp. 84, 124.

> The equation state=politics becomes erroneous and deceptive at exactly the moment when state and society penetrate each other […] In such a state, therefore, everything is at least potentially political, and in referring to the state it is no longer possible to assert for it a specifically political characteristic.[23]

But, after Agamben, it is easier to see that this anxiety that the specificity of the political will be erased if we extend its definition to sociability actually masks another fear – fear of a political totalitarianism equally destructive of political definition.

One feels that Schlegel's politics are not allowed to be political by Schmitt precisely because they are "original". It is this originality which attracts Rancière.

> Schlegel's idea of "progressive universal poetry" […] does not mean any straightforward idea of progress. On the contrary, 'romanticizing' the works of the past means taking them as metaphoric elements, sleeping and awakening, unsusceptible to different re-actualizations, according to new lines of temporality.[24]

For anything else to qualify for political consideration it would have to attain the status of the "enemy" of politics, the *Gegner* against which a political system resolves to be itself. Anything else is "based on the practice of constantly escaping from one sphere into another".[25] But the sociable wit of the Romantics is, Schmitt perceives, intended to overcome such enmity, to demoralise or disqualify the position of the adversary, and in its dialectic to overcome or synthesize the antagonism Schmitt thinks essential to politics and which allows politics to visit still on those outside the law the full vengeance of the law, even if in this case that title is lacking. Only the sustaining of the dyad of "friend and enemy" is sufficient to establish "a decisive entity which transcends the mere societal-associational groupings".[26]

I hope that it is now obvious that this re-works the Romantic difference from Kant, and is thus founded on a philosophical disagreement of profound consequences. Kant's turning of a contingent relationship between nature and understanding (or, alternatively, between things as they appear to us and as they are in themselves) into a necessary one was perceived as totalitarian. For

[23] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, cit., pp. 19, 22.

[24] J. Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetic* (hereafter D), ed. and trans. by S. Corcoran, Continuum, London 2010, p. 125.

[25] Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, cit., p. 145.

[26] Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, Text von 1932 mit einem und drei Corollarien, Duncker und Humblot, Berlin 1979, p. 65. "*Die Schlimmste Verwirrung entsteht dann, wenn Begriffe wie Recht und Frieden in solcher Weise politische benutzt werden, um klares politische Denken zu verhindern, die eigenen Bestrebungen zu legitimieren und die Gegner zu disqualifieren oder zu demoralizieren*".

Kant, we could not be in the position to question the isomorphism of nature and understanding if they were not necessarily collaborative. We'd be sawing off the branch we were sitting on. Our feeling for a possible difference here, then, must be aesthetic, but an aesthetic experience / judgement that shadowed this necessary isomorphism rather than sensed alternatives to it. Post-Kantian philosophy and Romantic art begged to differ. Without espousing antinomianism, the writings of Novalis, Kleist, Hölderlin and others provide a language for our experience of a self and nature we cannot manage within our usual conceptual boundaries. As Rilke was later to put it, "we are not quite (*verlässlich*) at home in the interpreted world".[27] We can't *know* this – Rilke posits animal life as the repository of such possible knowledge – but we feel it; and we are persuaded by the poetic renderings of this feeling.

This critique of the necessary restriction of our faculties to law-governed conceptuality extends to ethical and political spheres. Hegel had as little time as Carl Schmitt for Romantic irony, or an inflection of the provisional in all our judgements. But he historicised Kantian ideas and showed the relativity of our grasp of apparently Absolute categories. Reason had its phenomenology. In the story I tell here here, this makes him post-Kantian, and explains the involvement of epistemology in questions of authority and the political. Every stage in Reason's progress deals in 'bare life' in its own way. Romantic writing deals with our sense of a 'bare life' we are obliged to clothe if we are to experience it.

Bare life is the space in which Carl Schmitt's sovereign exercises its self-defining decisions. In the life outside politics and society Schmitt sees a deregulated sphere in need of a sovereign – someone who can restore regulation. Agamben, much more like the Romantics, sees 'bare life' as something which could be 'sweet', something which could be enjoyed; not a Hobbesian state of war which we get out of through a sovereignty in line with laws of reason or nature. What about the ontology of Agamben's own idea of a bare life which will neither be the emergency licensing the dictatorial sovereign or a state of complete exigency? He gets at it through subtle and learned aporias which displace and postpone well-being, somewhat despairingly. In *The Open: Man and Animal*, he talks in Rilkean fashion about how animals are to us both simple and mysterious. They are inhibited in ways that make our powers of self-recognition look infinitely flexible and varied in comparison. Equally, the limitation of the animal describes an 'at-homeness' in

[27] R.M. Rilke, 'Duiniser Elegien', in Id., *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by A. Post-Martens and G. Martens, Reclam, Stuttgart 2015, p. 757.

the world which we will never have. To that extent, their rootedness in their kind and in their environment is not banal but mysterious to us. Agamben's ultimate example is the tic whose animation is so barely recognizable that its life is a parody of any attempt to denude a view of life of anthropomorphism. Perhaps understandably, then, Agamben is fascinated by the anthropological theory of the 'missing-link'. He wants us to be missing links, as it were, in order to preserve an openness to biological life rather than its "total management". If we can render it 'inoperative' to the biological managers then we enter "the Shabbat of both animal and man".[28]

This day of rest, this Shabbat, is not simply a day for Agamben, it is a community. Hölderlin had written of *der kommende Gott*, the coming God, in his poem *Bread and Wine* not as a deity but as a kind of living poetic tradition in which the belatedness of mythic and theological ideas is part of our necessary phenomenology of the unconditioned. Just as the greeting of Shabbat both signals the day of the Sabbath and marks speaker and auditor as belonging to the community in which the greeting makes sense, so Agamben's desire for an "open" definition of bare life implies a community of such generosity of welcome that it needs a theological comparison to make sense. Agamben's presentation of a coming community uses postponement to preserve his idea of its freedom from contamination by coercive interests. In this community what we have in common are our differences from each other. Like Derrida and Nancy, he sees this happening in a community of friendship – "friendship as the consentiment of the pure fact of being". What is denied the pasturing animals, is something identified as a community or politics whose purposiveness without a purpose comes down to a "sharing of the same sweetness of existing". For Kant, the enhanced sense of life we experience in aesthetic experience no longer shadows the construction of the subject's experience of nature, but can "bring to light the ungovernable", the category Schmitt thinks frivolous nonsense.[29] The Romantics tried to produce a human universal less coercive than that given by Kant's *sensus communis* in his aesthetics. The attempt to do this without imposing a hierarchy among the various strands of human variety we can recognize in ourselves and others, a *partage du sensible*, is, it seems to me, what Jacques Rancière is about.

[28] G. Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. by K. Attell, Stanford University Press, Stanford (CA) 2004, pp. 77, 92.

[29] G. Agamben, *What is an Apparatus, and other essays*, Stanford University Press, Stanford (CA) 2009, pp. 35, 36, 24.

4. *Rancière and the 'Aesthetic Revolution'*

Recent political philosophy in a line from Arendt to Agamben rules out of court a single subject of human rights who has to belong to a state to have rights. The subject must be stateless order to have bare, *human* rights, which must consequently be unenforceable. The conclusion that this discredits human rights extends from Hobbes, through Maistre and others to Schmitt. The imagining of the capacity to occupy two contradictory positions on rights is one way of understanding Kant's aesthetic, where the defining law applies and does not apply at the same time – purposiveness without a purpose. But to "stage the scene of dissensus" between two positions, and so remove the need for politics to strive for consensus, is Rancière's ambition. This was Friedrich Schlegel's emphasis when he wrote of "an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating exchange of two conflicting thoughts".[30] The resulting "open predicates" of politics, like the equality he envisaged for pedagogy, describe a process; one in which whatever defines the human appears at different levels of equal belonging or status (D68-9).[31] Human rights, thinks Rancière, are accorded the disenfranchised by those whose States already enforce those rights. But the dispossessed can *originate* human rights, which differ from rights granted by those who already possess them. The franchise, for example, can be extended to people of colour who can still legitimately assert that black lives matter in a way that discovers other human rights. For Rancière, there is always Lyotard's "good" inhuman, the current "other", to play against ideas both of normative prescriptions of the human and the inhumane. Justice, like Leibniz's monad, is infinite, and no one possesses the exclusive right to define the humanity revealed in the perpetual unfolding of what Rancière calls "infinite justice" (D73-4).[32] Other ideas of his, such as "a-topic communism" (rather than Derrida's spectral version) follow. Again, Rancière takes his historical bearings for this ten-

[30] "[…] *eine absolute Synthesis absoluter Antithesen, der stete sich elbst erzeugende Wechsel zwei streitender Gedanken*" (*Athenäums-Fragmente* 121, in F. Schlegel, *Kritische Schriften und Fragmente [1798-1801]*, ed. by E. Behler and H. Eichner, Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn 1988, II.115).

[31] For Rancière on post-Revolutionary pedagogy, see his *Le maître ignorant: cinq leçons sur l'émancipation intellectuelle*, Fayard, Paris 1987.

[32] Rancière cites Lyotard's 'The Other's Rights' from S. Shute and S. Hurtey (eds.), *On Human Rights*, Basic Books, New York 1994. But the drive through the re-deployment of the Kantian sublime towards thinking an inoperative community (shared by Blanchot and Nancy), a humanism that will have been, rather than one that exists, runs right through Lyotard's work, with its characteristic "drift" (*derive*) from *discours* to *figure*.

dency from the aesthetic thinking of "a few German poets and philosophers" writing in "response to the failure of the French Revolution" (D80-1).

The metamorphosis or mobilization of the aesthetic anticipates the way that Marx, in Rancière's view, turned the Romantic 'aesthetic' revolution into "the programme for a 'human revolution'" (D82). In *Dissensus*, Rancière tracks this from Schiller's post-Kantian moment in his *Letters on the aesthetic education of mankind*, when he joins "autonomy and heteronomy", the autonomy of art and a heteronomous "art of living" (D 115-6). In *Le partage du sensible*, in Schiller's aesthetic state his idea of art can only be understood if we accept that it "wants to ruin" the (Platonic) idea of a society founded on an opposition between those who think and decide and those assigned to material labour.[33] Again, though, echoing Agamben, there is the worry that because Schiller's of art as play describes us at our most human, a heteronomous politics paralleling this art free of hierarchical constraint threatens to become totalitarian, legislating even for "bare life" (D 115). Accordingly, in his early book on pedagogy Rancière already sees the need for a crucial separation here. Aesthetic emancipation must lead to the Marxian vision of a fulfilling labour, one escaping the capitalist prescriptions for turning over the social machine and instead letting "circulate the electric energy of emancipation". Then the person who works is one who makes a work (*qui fait l'oeuvre, de la plume, du burin ou de tout autre outil*), activating that species-defining human emancipation Marx wants to transfer from aesthetics to labour.[34]

Rancière's thought here builds on his early application of Joseph Jacotot's *dérèglement* of educational hierarchy functions as follows. A society of contempt interprets difference as inequality. It therefore makes it impossible for its members to think equality other than as a levelling of the inequalities which actually should be understood as our distinguishing features. Kantian shadowing must be surpassed. A basis different from Kant's *sensus communis* or consensus is required for one to think a justice whose equitable differentiations are not between equality and inequality, superiority and inferiority, which are all levels of contempt. To redress injuries within this society is already to subscribe to that systematic view of things which is at fault. The same is true of well-meaning Enlightenment progressives who again construe human variety as stages of human amelioration.[35] Rancière believes that an alternative

[33] Rancière, *Le partage du sensible*, cit., pp. 40, 70-71.
[34] Rancière, *Le maître ignorant*, cit., pp.179-180.
[35] Ivi, pp. 191-192.

pluralism has to be pushed or tested. In this he is confessedly close to the post-Kantian political translation of the *Mischgedicht* in the speculations of Friedrich Schlegel and, one might add, Novalis's famous call for everything to be "romanticised" (D125).[36] Equally, the political admixtures or hybrid constitutions imagined by Schlegel's essay on republicanism and Novalis's *Europaschrift* and *Glauben und Liebe* owe less to the classical pragmatism of Polybius (the *locus classicus* of ideas of mixed constitutions). Instead they aspire to justify the unprecedented political daring of representing individual variety in a political framework which has been reorganized so that what has always looked like hierarchy (monarchy, aristocracy, commoners and so on) is re-cast to reflect difference. In this they are illuminated more by the recent re-imaginings of the political I have been exploring.

Unignorably, though, the problem these re-castings of political theorising end up with is the problem of pluralism. Again, though, answers to difficulties here take us back to those of the "aesthetic revolution", as Rancière calls it. Pluralism points out the incompatibility, even incommensurability, of different human goods, and so the necessity of negotiating between conflictual notions of human flourishing and the good life. There is no unified human *telos*, in the way that Aristotle thought, and so the exemplary ethical disposition must be a tolerance in which it is accepted that while there is some common ground between different people, cultures and resulting value-systems, there are also vast differences. What can be shared is, firstly, the will to make the most of ethical overlaps and so to search out all the possibilities of commonality. And, secondly, what is needful is an openness to criticism or a continual willingness to look at ethical and political difference in a comparative spirit which could lead to revision and alteration of one's own position in the light of an appreciation of that of others. Incommensurability does not exclude the possibility of mutual criticism; all it can exclude is the idea that we might assimilate criticism in the same way.

This looks like a Habermasian position, and Habermas is usually dismissed out of hand by French theorists. The common ground which does, however, persist for the reader of both lies in in the way in which, like Friedrich Schlegel, they view progressiveness in speculation neither as an aspiration towards magisterial pronouncement, a *prima philosophia*, nor as a continual surpassing of inferior versions on the path to perfection. Shared is the Romantic conviction that the arts are not progressive, a premise that replaced the

[36] Novalis, *Schriften*: *Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, ed. by P. Kluckhohn and R. Samuel, 3 voll., Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 1968, II. 545.

quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns with the quarrel between poetry and science. The even more ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry was re-thought in the process. Now the arts are held up as providing a standard of inclusiveness which political representation ought to emulate, but in its own way: not the mapping of a Schillerian aesthetic state in which we are completely human on to a political state, but a figuring of Schiller's anti-hierarchical aesthetics on its own terms.

Rancière's "aesthetic politics" not only attempts to occlude totalitarianism. It also strenuously separates "its form of liberty from the freedom of commodities" (D111). It sees, that is, the threat of another damaging convergence of aesthetic freedom with an opposite free-market deregulation. Not every form of expression is another level of the human monad's unfolding. Genuine contenders have to provoke the aesthetic to self-revision, to a receptivity where the newcomer to the aesthetic or political system has the authority to renegotiate current entry qualifications. In the case of art, this leads to the disappearance of art, when the self-refutations of the avant-garde eventually replace the actual work of art with a philosophy of what it is. This is the kind of impasse or 'end' of art recurring in philosophy from Hegel to Peter Bürger. The alternative, parallel route is the aesthetic self-transformation into labour canvassed from Marx to Benjamin. In keeping with the latter, if we agree with Rancière that from the (Romantic) start art uses its autonomy to invoke heteronomy, that it begins by arguing for its democratic translation into other, more available forms of creativity, then we have an alternative to that self-defeating modernism which surely loses its way when caught in the repetitive, reflectively dead-end logic of the avant-garde (D116-7)? At the same time, this alternative dispenses with that logic of the exception to which the aesthetic critique of instrumental reason had seemed still to belong despite itself. Enlightenment reason appeared to distinguish the human from nature but turned out to be murderously complicit in the force it tried to understand. Kant's aesthetic, too, appeared to try to enforce a self-understanding that was non-identical with concept and legality, yet was also a kind of disinterested shadowing of those prescriptions. Even in this non-coercive paradise, aesthetic freedom from ideology still traces a kind of mastery subject to the old dialectical dangers. Yet, as Agamben shows, a bare life completely exterior to regulation is either unusable politically, or, if politically represented, threatens totalitarian surveillance. Rancière, like Marx and Benjamin, wants a heteronomous politics, one using art not to aestheticize politics but redeploying aesthetic autonomy so as to refigure political freedom.

In Romanticism as understood by Benjamin and his followers, the power of art is its power of dissemination; conversely, the creativity of other activities it inspires have their originality validated by being traced back to the aesthetic impulse they have successfully transformed for their own purposes. In legitimating them, though, the aesthetic abandons the idea of exceptional mastery and authority. Schlegel's "progressive, universal poetry" has indeed, Rancière argues, inspired a political philosophy consequent upon "the permeability of the boundaries of art […] a kind of metamorphic status". Significantly, Rancière distinguishes his own "open concepts" from Derrida's Romantic-sounding "transcendental horizon" – in the spectral politics of *his* incorrigibly futuristic Marxism – by insisting on "democracy as a practice" (D 125, 59).[37] Derrida seems to share Lyotard's hesitancy before the consensus or *sensus communis* Kantian aesthetics establishes, and to make of dissensus sufficient intervention. He is not the "synthetic writer" (*synthetische Schrifsteller*) of the "universal progressive Poesie" championed by Schlegel, who "constructs and creates a new audience through that synthesis" (*konstruiert und schafft sich einen Leser*).[38] Rancière, more post-Kantian than Derrida and Lyotard, follows Benjamin in developing our understanding of an aesthetic activity through which art refigures itself in democratic material practice. To accredit these new metamorphoses of the aesthetic is a political act.

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[37] See J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. by P. Kamuf, Routledge, New York and London 2006, pp. 81-2.

[38] F. Schlegel, *Kritische Fragmente*, 112, in Behler and Eichner, 1.248.

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Anthropoaesthetics of Expression. Art and Knowledge in Friedrich Schleiermacher

di Gregorio Tenti*

ABSTRACT
At the core of Friedrich Schleiermacher's theory of individuality lies the concept of expression. From his early writings to his last lessons, Schleiermacher described an ever-manifesting individual, revolving around a dynamic connection to the foundational whole of universal forces. In his view, to produce individual knowledge means to align with such forces in a concretely singular way: it is the case of artistic knowledge, regarded as a process of manifestation of an interiorly resonating becoming. This paper aims at analysing the role of expressive knowledge in Schleiermacher's philosophy, with special regard to his aesthetics and to the concept of *Trieb* (impulse). The particular presence of an anthropological tone in his view will finally be indicated as an 'anthropoaesthetic' feature that characterizes the Moravian philosopher's thought.

KEYWORDS
Expression, Anthropoaesthetics, Artistic Behaviour, Theory of Individuality, Trieb

A fundamental and certainly original trait of Friedrich Schleiermacher's thought concerns the kind of knowledge that establishes relations of singularity between concrete individuals, without passing through the abstract universal. The theme of the *individual knowledge of individuality* crosses the whole of Schleiermacher's work, from the *Reden Über die Religion* to his last contribution on aesthetics. Although this theme has unanimously been acknowledged by critics,[1] it has rarely been addressed in all its depth. The issue revolves around the knowledge that goes "from particular to particular",[2] which today can become emancipated from the

* Università degli Studi di Genova (IT), grgr.tenti@gmail.com

[1] See R. Odebrecht, *Schleiermachers System der Ästhetik. Grundlegung und Problemsgeschichtliche Sendung*, Junker und Dünnhaupt, Berlin 1932, pp. 40-91; T. Lehnerer, *Die Kunsttheorie Friedrich Schleiermachers*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart 1987, pp. 153-87; R. Diana, *Espressione e conoscenza individuale nell'estetica di Schleiermacher*, in "Archivio di storia della cultura", 10, 1997, pp. 377-400; P. D'Angelo, *Attraverso la storia dell'estetica, vol. II: da Kant a Hegel*, Quodlibet, Macerata 2019, pp. 325-27, 353-58.

[2] "*Einzelnes durch einzelnes*", says Schleiermacher (KGA I/11, p. 779). The same expression is used also by Dilthey (W. Dilthey, *Leben Schleiermachers* (1870), vol. I, ed. M.

link with the Romantic *en kai pan* (exemplarily underlined by Dilthey) and be regarded for example as a 'transductive' character of thought. 'Transduction' here means neither inductive nor deductive, but analogic knowledge, i.e., based on the "asymmetric qualification" of the correlation, on the problematic field established between concrete determinations.[3] In order to know an individual or an artwork, for example, one has correlate to them without concept, by virtue of a meaningful dissymmetry and a common process.

One may begin by noticing how this kind of knowledge is hinted at in certain definitions of the concept of *expression*, where it refers to a "morphologic solidarity between extraneous phenomena",[4] a relation of productive implication between different series.[5] Schleiermacher is in fact one of the most important interpreters of the concept of expression, intended as a form of differential communication, of elicitation by spiritual contact. Art and religion in particular are defined by Schleiermacher as the most proper forms of expressive knowledge, whose content represents a singularity that evokes an irreducibly singular way of its own communication. A semiotic paradox comes into play: the knowledge of individuality must itself assume an individual form. To 'have knowledge' of an individual, here, is to participate in a movement of expressive entanglement that involves creation: a singularity *expresses* itself and can only be expressed. This problem animates some of the most significant and topical efforts of Schleiermacher's thought. This paper attempts to analyse them according to two complementary aspects, one of ontological-metaphysical (section I) and the other of aesthetical-anthropological nature (sections II and III).

1. *The Expressionist Solution*

The concept of expression has roots in all Schleiermacher's philosophy and characterizes his reflection on aesthetics, to the extent that Wellek wrote, "Schleiermacher was apparently the first to attempt, with any speculative power, an aesthetic of feeling,

Redeker, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. XIII, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingen 1991, p. 192).

[3] G. Simondon, *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information*, Jerôme Millon, Paris 2005, p. 201.

[4] F. Leoni, *Habeas Corpus. Sei genealogie del corpo occidentale*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2019, p. 57; see also F. Bailly, G. Longo, *Mathematics and the Natural Sciences. The Physical Singularity of Life*, Imperial College Press, London 2011, p. 54.

[5] G. Deleuze, *Différénce et répétition* (1969); Eng. trans. *Difference and Repetition*, Columbia University Press, New York 1995, pp. 260-1.

of the creative act, of expression".[6] Schleiermacher's aesthetics has misled generations of commentators up until recent times because of its peculiarity that lacks almost any tradition.[7] As a theory of expression, it seems possible to recognize its Romantic and Goethean roots; however, it remains difficult to establish if Schleiermacher owes the *Frühromantik* more than the *Frühromantik* owes him.[8] It is likely that Schleiermacher had elaborated an expressionist conception through the constant study of Spinoza before coming into contact with the early Romantic circle. Spinoza can be considered, after all, the forefather of philosophical expressionism in a modern sense, the one who brought together the Neoplatonic and Scotist motives that will come to Nietzsche, Heidegger and Whitehead.[9]

The idea of expression is to be considered in the first place as one of the fundamental gestures of Western philosophy, the expedient that allows philosophy to conceive the immanence of ontological activity and passivity. In the pages of the Spinozian *Ethics*, the expressed, taken in its process, is essence and not accident of what expresses itself: thus, an expressing God is no longer the remote cause of the world. Resembling the notion of *explicatio* (the unfolding of the divine essence), the concept of expression constitutes a refinement of the representative perspective,[10] which is based on the transitivity and reversibility of content and form. In dealing with the problem of the relation between God and the world, Schleiermacher will explicitly use the metaphysical idea of expression in this sense, to correct the representative (i.e., creationist) perspective.[11] While a representative paradigm implies the idea of creation as a subjective creator's action, in which the form of what is created remains contingent, an expressive paradigm instead involves the idea of creation as the development of a reality that, although belonging to a different order, is essentially inherent to what is created and consists in it. Here, form and content are equally necessary, and the form is not transitive or reversible because it requires a real genesis.

[6] R. Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism. 1750-1950*, vol. 2, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1955, p. 308.

[7] See D'Angelo, cit., pp. 301-22.

[8] See A. Voskanian, 'Warum Schleiermacher kein Romantiker ist', in U. Barth, C.-D. Osthövener (eds.), *200 Jahre „Reden Über die Religion". Akten des 1. Internationalen Kongresses der Schleiermacher-Gesellschaft. Halle 14.-17. März 1999*, de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2000, pp. 574-82; D'Angelo, cit., pp. 359-81.

[9] See for example G. Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (1968); Eng. trans. *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, Zone Books, New York 1990.

[10] See G. Colli, *Filosofia dell'espressione* (1969), Adelphi, Milano 2016, pp. 19ff., 57ff.

[11] D II, pp. 299-314; KGA I/7, 1, pp. 140-50.

In Schleiermacher's thought, the idea of expression is not of aesthetic origin; it rather builds a bridge between aesthetics and the other areas of his philosophy. In the *Reden Über die Religion* and the *Monologen*, for instance, one can find an already formulated metaphysics of the expressive relation between individual and universe, finite and infinite, at whose center is the active-passive event of individuating elaboration. However, some earlier writings clearly reveal how this conception dates back to the Spinozian studies and to the theory of *conatus* in particular. Especially in the exposition of *Spinozismus* (1793/94), the individual intended as singularity (*Einzelheit*) is connected to the dynamic fundament of the universe through his *Trieb*, a living impulse of manifestation placed before the distinction between subject and object. The impulse is "expression of the fundamental force which resides in the original matter of the thing", and takes form in proto-aesthetic manifestations (such as gestures) or proto-moral ones (such as tendencies and dispositions).[12] On this very idea is based the 'great living law' of individuality that forms the speculative ground of the *Reden* and the *Monologen*, where the human soul is described for the first time as a product of two impulses, one of spiritual expansion and one of spiritual contraction.[13]

The notion of *Trieb* was in fact very much in vogue in the Halle tradition, where Schleiermacher was trained in philosophy between 1792 and 1794.[14] His vision of an ever-forming universe through the individual formula will change, from the early years of 1800, into a philosophical framework in which every human act is a becoming-organ of the fundament[15] and "every act is expression" of the world's reason. From Schleiermacher's ethical viewpoint, "life itself is called art".[16] The expression of the fundament – a concept that becomes progressively more complex in Schleiermacher's philosophy –[17] designates an intimate link of man with himself, an "immediate self-consciousness", which however is also a live presence of the universe in the individual, in correspondence with

[12] KGA I/1, p. 537; see D. Thouard *L'éthique de l'individualité chez Schleiermacher*, in "Archives de Philosophie", 77, 2, 2014, pp. 281-99.

[13] KGA I/2, p. 191.

[14] See G. D'Aniello *Una ontologia dialettica. Fondamento e autocoscienza in Schleiermacher*, Pagina, Bari 2007, chap. I.

[15] SW II, p. 120.

[16] SW II, p. 313.

[17] In general, the notion of fundament designates the live presence of the absolute in men. Schleiermacher operates an epochal shift toward an experiential and anthropological understanding of the first principle, as an unobjectifiable nature that can only be found expressed in the actual harmony of man's faculties (see A. Arndt, 'Die Metaphysik der Dialektik', in C. Helmer, C. Kranich und B. Rehme-Iffert (eds.), *Schleiermachers Dialektik. Die Liebe zum Wissen in Philosophie und Theologie*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2003, pp. 135-39; D'Aniello, cit., chap. II).

the active-passive principle of feeling. Here the *Selbstbewusstsein*, before being thematized by an act of consciousness, is *Selbstmanifestation*, manifestation of the self. As noted by Hermann Timm,[18] the principle of *Sichäußern* is pivotal to all Schleiermacher's mature reflection on religion.

So much for the pervasiveness of the expressionist solution in Schleiermacher's thought. There is, besides, a specific order of human doing that *reveals and thematizes* this fundamental dynamic. It is the sphere of "individual symbolizing activities", distinct from the "identical" ones, in which the form of the act is codifiable and the content is transferable as it is. Scientific knowledge represents, for instance, a symbolizing activity, that makes use of a codified and transparent medium to vehiculate an identical content. In scientific knowledge, form and content can be separated in function of abstract universality. Individual knowledge is based on a different semiotic relation: the content 'emanates' from the particular form,[19] the expressed comes before the *exprimendum* (the 'how' before the 'what'). It is not that an abstract knowledge is applied on an object by a knowing subject: rather, one must say that a dynamic determination (the feeling) finds consistency and recognizes itself in its own symbolic manifestation, mediates itself productively, thus constituting the real and effective life of the object.

That is how feeling – the active and immediate presence of the fundament – is realized in the artwork and the exercise of faith. Art and religion are the two fundamental modes of knowing what is most individual and most universal at once, the divine in the singularity. The artistic act, as well as the act of faith, is never a pure act of volition or fabrication by a sovereign subject, but rather an act that arises by elicitation, by evenemential encounter; that produces further elicitation through the life of the work; that evokes, then, an organic and concomitant reformulation and requires a prolongation to be comprehended, not bearing to be reduced to a simple *datum*. Expression goes from individuality to individuality, from that sort of concrete universal that is the singular self-consciousness to another, as a passage of life. In light of all this, for Schleiermacher, religion represents the necessary conclusion of art, because art must comprehend itself according to its own expressive and vital task. If art were to lose the thread of *Selbstmanifestation*, it would be reduced to mere artifice and reverie.

[18] H. Timm, *Die heilige Revolution. Schleiermacher – Novalis – Friedrich Schlegel*, Syndikat, Frankfurt a.M. 1978, p. 43.

[19] SW II, p. 181.

2. *Art as Expression*

There is a general plane of expression, linked to a metaphysics of individuality, and a specific plane of expression that resumes it, the plane of art. "Expression, then", writes Scholtz,[20] "in Schleiermacher has a meaning which is objective and subjective at once. The concept includes the meaning of the Aristotelian concept of mimesis, insofar as the 'artistic activity' brings to completion what was already announced in nature". In Schleiermacher's works on ethics, but also and above all in his writings on aesthetics, art represents a model of knowledge that does not 'regard' its object, but creates it. Such knowledge relies on an act of recognition of the self in the world, but this recognition takes place through the inner creation of an archetypal symbol (*Urbild*): the real is interiorly produced in the ideal. Not to lose the transcendental meaning of archetype, Schleiermacher refers to it as something that is 'found'; the peculiarity of the archetype is indeed the possibility of being expressed, which means being *further* – though not originally – produced. But the symbol is not comparable to an object that can be found; rather to a sense that is received and allowed to develop. The original image, here, is not a scheme open to its employs, but a dynamic formation that requires an expressive and therefore a truly genetic act.[21] It establishes an immanent rule of the process, because it stems from the process itself as a singular novelty.

Here, then, is the core of Schleiermacher's aesthetics. What distinguishes artistic activity from the others and from what is *kunstlos*, non-artistic, is exactly this differential moment, this sort of deferment that separates the affect from mundane phenomenality, cultivates it and sublimates into a symbol.[22] Schleiermacher describes this central moment, this sort of second creation, as part of an overall process of manifestation that arises from feeling and concludes in an "execution" (be it with or without work). The constructiveness of phantasy arises legitimately only from an inner tendency toward expression: man stands as an articulation of the universe because he can bind reality to the active source of ideality in himself.[23] The catalysation of feeling is described as the

[20] G. Scholtz, *Die Philosophie Schleiermachers*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1984, p. 142.

[21] Hence the other principle, that of universality of the genius: since art is first of all a form of creation, then "every artist is a genius"; but since art is, even before that, manifestation of the fundament that is actively present in the individual self, one must add that "every man is an artist", at least to some extent (SW II, p. 184).

[22] ÄL, p. 10-11.

[23] In Schleiermacher's Speeches at the Berlin Academy of Sciences devoted to aesthetics, this phase of the creative process is made the subject of a terminological rewording:

human faculty of retaining affects, of making them grow within a tensive field or plane of resonance (*Stimmung*), which determines a condition of enthusiasm (*Begeisterung*). It is just then that a formative process can take place.

Expression is a figure of *mimesis* only as it places the archetype inside, not outside the individual (ÄL 4); as it ties to the idea of *Nachbildung*, the dynamic cohesion of the universe and the individual in the recreating act (and not to the *Nachahmung*, the exterior imitation). If nature stands as a force and not as a complex of figures, then *mimesis* is not a static mirroring but rather a modulation of the force itself. The "archetypal force" of artistic act[24] articulates vectors that come from the trunk of individual *conatus*, regarded as an essential tendency of the fundament to manifestation. For this reason, too, one should not take a subtractive approach toward the artistic process, according to which the material completion of the creative moment, that is the physically constructive moment, would be redundant after all:[25] if the artistic process is the process of expression of a force, every passage is a realizing increase,[26] and the material production of the world is a fulfilment of the ideal creative act; so that – in an expressionist view – to deny the necessity of it would mean to deny the effective reality of the previous moment. By affirming the logical and ontological priority of the immaterial moment does nothing but reintroduce a representative perspective, a 'poor' Platonism, in which the idea is simply truer than the thing, without acknowledging the reverse semiotic relation that pertains to expressive determinations. It is for this same reason that in Schleiermacher's conception, religion is not 'truer' than art because it is purer, less compromised with matter: on the contrary, religion needs art just as art needs religion. Since rooted in an expressive impulse that ultimately traces back to the fundament of all things, the ideal-real materiality of artistic doing is contingent and necessary at once.

More than a spiritual fundament, here too it is necessary to conceive a dynamic, non-finalistic principle of activity: a *Trieb*, then, formulated as a *Kunsttrieb*, an artistic impulse. At the beginning of the lessons on aesthetics of 1818/19 (as already in *Brouillon* of 1805/06), the notion of *Kunsttrieb* seems to play with the ambiv-

the *Urbild* becomes a "*Gestalt*" and the moment of *Urbildung* a "*Vorbildung*", a "prefiguration". This reformulation contributes to further de-sublimate the notion of genius and deprives – at least in part – fantasy of its archetypal power, perhaps perceived as a Romantic residue.

[24] ÄL, p. 42.

[25] B. Croce, *L'estetica di Federico Schleiermacher*, in "La Critica", 33, 1935, p. 119.

[26] ÄL, p. 33.

alence of the term *Kunst*, still intended as *ars*, the dimension of ethical competence. In this sense, art is present in every man's life, and the impulse is a generic *Trieb der Äußerung*,[27] a universal tendency toward manifestation as elaboration of the world. However, the same *Trieb* also animates the *specifically* artistic expression: it is also an *Impuls zur Kunst*[28] realized in the different arts, determined by places, epochs, and personal predispositions. A character of indetermination, thus, pertains essentially to the concept of impulse. It represents a movement of gradual realization that results in different determinations according to its grade, without any change in nature. The *Kunsttrieb* is a universal impulse to manifestation when considered closer to its root, an impulse to symbolic production when considered in its more precise expressions.

Though without properly clarifying it (and thus paving the way to more than one uncertainty), Schleiermacher will remain perfectly consistent with this insight, which will allow him to conceive the universality of the aesthetic principle beside the autonomous legitimacy of artistic phenomena. Insofar as it is grafted in the *Trieb*, the process of *Urbildung* itself is placed before the binomial spontaneity/organization; and it is no coincidence that, whereas young Schleiermacher translated with *Trieb* the Spinozian *conatus*, mature Schleiermacher will translate with the same term the *eidos* of the Platonic *Phaedrus*.[29] The action of inventive intelligence is not exterior to the movement of the impulse, which 'finds its form' like an organic development. A seed of formative organization, as a primitive "need for rhythm and harmony",[30] is always present in the impulse as its aspiration to universality. The reflexive moment does not interrupt the expressive process; it is a step towards its completion.

3. *Aesthetics and the Tangle of the Living*

In order to understand the implications of an aesthetic of expression such as Schleiermacher's, let us take a closer look at the notion of *Trieb*, so widespread and important at the time.[31] At the beginning of the 18th century, the idea of impulse seemed to inter-

[27] KGA I/11, p. 741.

[28] KGA I/11, p. 780.

[29] See C. Berner, *Le langage de la philosophie. Dialogue et communicabilité chez Friedrich Schlegel et Friedrich Schleiermacher*, in "Revue philosophique de Lovain", 112, 2, 2014, p. 278.

[30] KGA I/11, p. 781.

[31] See F.J. Wetz 'Trieb', in J. Ritter *et al.* (eds.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Bd. 10, Schwabe & co. AG., Basel 1998, pp. 1483-88.

cept a conceptual need of the epoch, anticipated by the Spinozian doctrine of *conatus*, the Leibnizian doctrine of *appetitus* and the medical theories on the immanent purposiveness of organic life. The University of Halle is at the very centre of this speculative development. The vitalist approach of Georg Ernst Stahl, professor of Medicine in Halle until 1714, played a fundamental role in that tradition and in the development of Pietism as a whole,[32] introducing a scientifically legitimate reasoning by forces (rather than by simple mechanical causes). Stahl's doctrines directly influenced Christian Thomasius' *Affektenlehre*, in which the *Trieb* holds special importance;[33] but the notion of impulse will actually establish itself in the Halle tradition thanks to a fierce opposer of Stahl, Christian Wolff, who will transmit it to Baumgarten and Crusius.[34] The concept will then survive the dispute between Pietism and Wolffian rationalism to assume different meanings in Schiller, Herder, Reinhold, and Fichte. This is the conceptual atmosphere breathed by Schleiermacher in his early years in Halle. For the young Moravian philosopher, the notion of *Trieb* addresses the need of a unified idea of man as a psychophysical unity in activity, linking the domains of morality and reason to those of affectivity and motivations.

Among the many possible impulses – paradigmatically described by Crusius in his *Anweisung, vernünftig zu leben* (1744) – one of the most mentioned was the artistic impulse, the *Kunsttrieb*.[35] Hermann Samuel Reimarus, who described the *Trieb* in general as an irreflexive instinct, designated the *Kunsttrieb* as a skilful drive toward regulated modification of the environment that belongs to all animals – from which the human doing is distinguished, however, by the presence of reflection.[36] If nature has a *Kunstinstinkt* of its own, as Novalis puts it,[37] the human production is part of and

[32] See J. Geyer-Kordesch, 'Georg Ernst Stahl's Radical Pietist Medicine and its Influence on the German Enlightenment', in A. Cunningham and R. French (eds.), *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1990, pp. 67-87; J. Zammito, *The Gestation of German Biology. Philosophy and Physiology from Stahl to Schelling*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2018, chap. 1.

[33] See J. Geyer-Kordesch, 'Die Medizin im Spannungsfeld zwischen Aufklärung und Pietismus: Das unbequeme Werk Georg Ernst Stahls und dessen kulturelle Bedeutung', in N. Hinske (ed.), *Zentren der Aufklärung. Halle. I. Aufklärung und Pietismus*, Niemeyer, Heidelberg 1989, pp. 255-74.

[34] See S. Buchenau, *Trieb, Antrieb, Triebfeder dans la philosophie morale prékantienne*, in "Revue Germanique Internationale", 18, 2002, pp. 11-24.

[35] See H. Kelm, 'Zur Konzeption des „Kunsttriebs" bei Schleiermacher und Steffens im Hinblick auf eine systematische Verbindung von Ästhetik und Naturphilosophie', in S. Schimdt, L. Miodonski (eds.), *System und Subversion. Friedrich Schleiermachers und Henrik Steffens*, de Gryuter, Berlin-Boston 2018, pp. 161-65.

[36] See Zammito, cit., pp. 138-44.

[37] Novalis, *Schriften*, Bd. III, ed. R. Samuel, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darm-

simultaneously differentiates itself from the natural becoming. This character of difference-in-the-continuity is clearly present in Herder's conception of *Trieb*,[38] where the human faculty of reflection is described as *Besonnenheit*, "*the single positive force of thought* […] bound up with a certain *organization of the body*".[39] Friedrich Schiller, as well, will famously express a doctrine of aesthetic impulse in *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1794). Significant theories of aesthetic force and *Trieb*, however, had already been formulated by authors such as Karl Philipp Moritz, for example in *Über die bildende Nachahmung des Schönen* (1788), or Georg Forster in *Die Kunst und das Zeitalter* (1789).

We want to suggest that the concept of *Trieb* represents an important *anthropological* feature of the 18th century aesthetics, first dominant in the Halle tradition[40] and then, before the end of the century, spread in all German philosophy.[41] Intended as a *Physik der Seele*, before the Kantian separation from morality, philosophical anthropology confronted itself with the tangle of the spiritual and the corporeal, addressing the issue of how the living develops in a moral and ideal being.[42] In this frame, corporeity and affectivity are animated by a drive toward constructive manifestation which, in presence of cognitive faculties, leads to an idealized elaboration of the world, which represents man's specific destination. Aesthetics is one of the many sciences in charge of the description of the whole man, and also a central one, because it addresses the connection itself between nature and reason as given in human experience and activity. Though assuming the autonomization of aesthetics as theory of art, Schleiermacher refers in great measure to these debates. This filiation is particularly clear in his own use of the concepts of *Trieb* and *Kunsttrieb*.

The *Trieb* is an element of a certain importance in Schleiermacher's philosophy as a whole. Only in his anthropology, however, it assumes a clear role in the description of the human as an individualized spiritual nature. What comes the closest to an an-

stadt 1983, p. 650.

[38] See P. Pénisson, *Trieb et énergie chez Herder*, in "Revue Germanique Internationale", 18, 2002, pp. 45-52.

[39] J.G. Herder, *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1772); Eng. trans. *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (MA) 2002, p. 84.

[40] See E. Stöckmann *Anthropologische Ästhetik. Philosophie, Psychologie und ästhetische Theorie der Emotionen in der Diskurs der Aufklärung*, Niemeyer, Tübingen 2009.

[41] Suffice it to think of the famous notion of *Bildungstrieb*, for which see S. Fabbri Bertoletti, *Impulso formazione organismo. Per una storia del concetto di* Bildungstrieb *nella cultura tedesca*, Olschki, Firenze 1990.

[42] See M. Linden, *Untersuchungen zum Anthropologiebegriff des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Lang, Frankfurt a.M.-Bern 1976.

thropologic exposition in Schleiermacher's works are most certainly his lessons in psychology, envisioned and held in the exact same years as those in aesthetics.[43] Psychology, in Schleiermacher's view, corresponds directly to anthropology, for it concerns man as a corporeal and spiritual whole in activity.[44] The human is thus divided in a sphere of receptivity, corresponding to the "sense" (*Sinn*), and a sphere of activity, corresponding to the *Trieb*. As distinguished from and correlated to *Sinn*, the *Trieb* represents the dimension of human activity in general, the "being of the soul in the things":[45] it designates a non-finalistic nor stereotyped endogenous force that constructively effectuates itself in exteriority (thus referring much more to the concept of will than to that of instinct).

Among the modes of human impulse described in the psychology lessons, one of the most important is that of artistic manifestation, the *Kunsttrieb*, which can be referred to as the 'artistic tendency' of man. However skilled, a manifestation can be called artistic only when it passes from irreflexive exteriorization to reflexive expression, that is, when it emancipates itself from stereotypy and object-dependence in the specific ways of art. This movement is fulfilled in a moment of concrete universality, in which man creatively elevates his expression to the other's comprehension by moulding the ideal.[46] The essence of art lies precisely in this threshold; but the *Trieb* grants it continuity with manifestation in general. Insofar as the feeling cannot be simply the content of the impulse, we must say that between feeling and impulse there is an expressive equivalence. In fact, the *Gefühl* corresponds to the fundamental coalescence of *Sinn* and *Trieb*, receptivity and activity.

In the lessons on aesthetics the key concept of *Kunsttrieb* un-

[43] See A. Arndt, 'Schleiermachers Psychologie – eine Philosophie des subjektiven Geistes?', in A. von Scheliha, J. Dierken (eds.), *Der Mensch und seine Seele. Bildung – Frömmigkeit – Ästhetik. Akten des internationalen Kongresses der Schleiermacher-Gesellschaft in Münster, September 2015*, de Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2017, p. 247.

[44] See H. Herms, 'Leibhafter Geist – Beseelte Organisation. Schleiermachers Psychologie als Anthropologie. Ihre Stellung in seinem theologisch-philosophischen System und ihre Gegenwartsbedeutung', in A. von Scheliha, J. Dierken (eds.), *Der Mensch und seine Seele. Bildung – Frömmigkeit – Ästhetik. Akten des internationalen Kongresses der Schleiermacher-Gesellschaft in Münster, September 2015*, de Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2017, pp. 217-244. More precisely, psychology can be defined as the idealization of the natural activities of the living, and anthropology as the ethology of the idealizing living being, in which "the physiologic and the pragmatic is one and the same, only in different directions" (KGA I/2, p. 366). Friedrich Schlegel too, in conflict with Kant's *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, conceived a "science of humanity" as a "fusion of psychology and physiology" which includes also aesthetics (F. Schlegel *Kritische-Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, vol. XVI, ed. by H. Eichner, Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn/München/Wien 1981, p. 14).

[45] KGA II/13, p. 34.

[46] KGA II/13, p. 1011.

derlies the same basic principle: the differential relation between what is *kunstlos* (non-artistic, natural) and what is instead *Kunst*.[47] At the centre of the aesthetic reflection, then, is the connection between an energetic basin represented by the lifeworld and art as a dimension of measure and ideality. In the process of creation, this relation is articulated as the production of a resonance of lived experiences (*Stimmung*), from which stems enthusiasm (*Begeisterung*), that becomes a full-fledged inspiration in light of a reflexive mediation of archetypal nature (*Urbildung*). What Schleiermacher describes as the paradigmatic development of *Kunstthätigkeit* is a movement rooted in a "too elevated" tangle, a "*Zuhoc*"[48] that resides in the innermost regions of the living, of which one can only say that it has the nature of an impulse, endowed with an "ethical" and a "cosmic meaning" at once.[49] The deepest significance of the concept of art, thus, has an anthropologic character, not only and not so much because it belongs to all men like a transcendental structure, but first and foremost because it crosses and assumes the pre-reflexive plane of affectivity and tendencies.

From an anthropological perspective, all Schleiermacher's aesthetics become clearer. The movement from non-artistic to artistic manifestation, for example, explains the order of exposition of the single arts, which goes from the most 'natural' (especially mimic and music) to the most ideal ones (such as painting and poetry). But the same movement corresponds to the description of the artistic act, which starts with a pre-conscious conversion and canalization of a lived meaning and revolves around the 'attractor' of the *Urbildung*. To an anthropological intonation belongs Schleiermacher's theory of physiological derivation of the arts as well. According to this theory, every art descends from the exercise of specific organs; the "organs", however, are material-immaterial components described as both exterior and interior forms of activity (there is an exterior ear, for instance, as much an interior one), zones of transparency of a body intended as live and expressive matter.[50] This makes explicit how art takes place in the liminal zone of becoming between corporeity and spirituality, the mysterious tangle of receptivity and activity in which the individual being itself consists.

[47] See Lehnerer, cit., pp. 147-51.
[48] ÄL, p. 5.
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] ÄL, pp. 51-53.

4. *Schleiermacher and Anthropoaesthetics*

If it is true that, in the process that "could be entitled 'from Shaftesbury to the Romantics'", the idea of expression becomes an "autonomous aesthetic fact" with the birth of phantasy as a free creative faculty,[51] it is also true that it never disposes of its manifold connotations of physiological, psychological, and anthropological nature.[52] In Schleiermacher, an expressionist aesthetics rests precisely on an *anthropological interest toward individuality*, as opposed to a *logical interest toward identity* that underlies, instead, what can be referred to as a representative aesthetics. There is a clear-cut distinction, for Schleiermacher, between representative communication, which conveys an identical meaning on the basis of an intersubjective relation of abstract transparency, and expressive communication, which implies the creative becoming of what expresses itself and founds a common process between the terms. It follows that while an aesthetics of representation is based on a 'passive anthropology', an aesthetics of expression presupposes an 'active anthropology' that understands man in formative relation with nature.[53]

We can finally see to what extent an 'anthropoaesthetic'[54] meaning echoes in the statement "*in der Kunst* […] *ist alles bloßer Ausdruck*".[55] Although it is correct to say, as Edgar Wind did,[56] that Schleiermacher asserts a still rather pronounced articulation between 'art' and 'life', his will to properly conceive the passage between the two is also very evident; to the point that he comes to formulate a full-fledged theory of creative distillation of individual experiences, taken without concept in their affective significance, as a fundamental mode of human nature. Schleiermacher's concept of impulse specifically indicates the abolition of a rigid distinction between reason and sensibility[57] and grounds a virtuous relationship between ideality and reality. In light of the living tangle that under-

[51] L. Formigari, *Sulla genesi del concetto di espressione. Il Settecento inglese*, in "Revue Internationale de Philosophie", 16, 59/1, 1962, pp. 101, 103.

[52] See C. Cappelletto, E. Franzini, *Estetica dell'espressione*, Le Monnier, Firenze 2005; N. Meuter, *Anthropologie des Ausdrucks. Die Expressivität des Menschen zwischen Natur und Kultur*, Wilhelm Fink, München 2006.

[53] NS, pp. 6-7.

[54] For the coining of this term see K. Mandoki, *The Evolution of Aesthesis*, in "Rivista di Estetica", 54, 2013, pp. 117-33, and Id., *The Indispensable Excess of Aesthetics: Evolution of Sensibility in Nature*, Rowman & Littlefield, London 2015.

[55] "In art, all is pure expression" (ÄL, p. 42).

[56] E. Wind, 'Warburgs Begriff der Kulturwissenschaft und seine Bedeutung für die Ästhetik' (1930), in D. Wuttke (ed.), *Aby Warburg. Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, Koerner, Baden-Baden 1992, pp. 174 ff.

[57] ÄL, p. 52.

lies the *Einzelne*, the creative act of genius itself is thus subject of a paradigmatic de-sublimation.

We have tried to demonstrate the deep connection between Schleiermacher's epistemology of individuality, his aesthetics of expression, and his anthropology. The concept of *Trieb* may be interpreted as a bridge between all these aspects and as the concept of a dynamic continuity that grants the possibility of a non-conceptual and productive analogy between individuals in general. The essence of man itself, in Schleiermacher's philosophy, is epitomized by the constant drive toward communicative manifestation as a spiritual construction of the world, so that the idea of human being coincides with the possibility of his natural-spiritual activities. In this framework, the aesthetic investigation does not revolve around the chance of revealing an unconscious vitality beneath the symbolic guises of art: it is rather about following the seed of human doing, the "behavioural predisposition"[58] that finally leads to artistic forms.

In conclusion, it is noteworthy that by giving priority to the interior modulation of lived experiences Schleiermacher avoids the reduction of behaviour to the causal dependence on external stimuli (the experiential data), as well as he avoids a phenomenalist understanding of behaviour which limits the investigation to what happens 'publicly', 'in the open', outside man's interior elaboration.[59] To say that individual communication is not measurable (since it does not rely on identical measure) and not primarily public (since it connects individuals through their inwardness), but rather contingent, transformative, and interior, means to endow communication with a transductive or expressive character.[60] The knowledge of the other as an individual, in this view, does not concern what happens between the individuals but rather what happens 'through' them. An aesthetic that wants to acknowledge his anthropological implications[61] needs to hold some kind of expressionist solution, if it does not want to slide into reductionism. From this viewpoint, too, going back to Schleiermacher's aesthetics would be worth the effort.

[58] E. Dissanayake, *Roots and Route of the Artification Hypothesis*, in "Avant", vol. VIII, 1, 2017, p. 26.

[59] See T. Tice, 'Schleiermacher's Psychology: An Early Modern Approach, a Challenge to Current Tendencies', in G. Meckenstock, J. Ringleben (eds.), *Schleiermacher und die wissenschaftliche Kultur des Christentums*, de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 1991, pp. 514ff.

[60] See A. Mróz, *Towards Behavioral Aesthetics*, in "The Polish Journal of Aesthetics", 52, 1, 2019, pp. 95-111.

[61] See e.g. E. Dissanayake, *Art as Human Behavior: Toward an Ethological View of Art*, in "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", 38, 4, 1980, pp. 397-406; but also G.W. Bertram, *Kunst als menschliche Praxis. Eine Ästhetik* (2014); Eng. trans. *Art as Human Practice. An Aesthetics*, Bloomsbury, London-New York 2014.

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Who's Afraid of Seneca? Conflict And Pathos in the Romantic-Idealistic Theory of Tragedy

di Giovanna Pinna*

Abstract
This paper reconsiders the Idealistic aesthetics of tragedy from an unconventional point of view. It investigates the relationship between theory and dramatic canon by focusing on those works and authors that are excluded from the canon by the theoretical discourse. My aim is to show that Idealist philosophers and Romantic critics concur in constructing a unitary model of the tragic conflict that is partly defined through its contraposition to the 'Senecan' conception of tragedy as a representation of suffering and as a dialectic of passions. Seneca here stands for an entire line of European dramaturgy, culminating in French Classicism, in which the negativity that produces the mournful outcome is rooted in the inner self of the tragic hero and is not redeemed by the affirmation of a superior ethical or metaphysical instance. This contrast does not merely concern a literary model, but also, more generally, the conception of subjectivity underlying the dramaturgy of passions. This paper thus helps to shed light on the controversial relationship between the idealistic philosophy of the tragic with modern tragedy at large.

Keywords
Theory of Tragedy, Idealism, Seneca, Hegel, Pathos

1. *Introduction*

Tragedy or the tragic? Peter Szondi's statement that Aristotle inaugurated a poetics of tragedy, and Schelling a philosophy of the tragic, has become an unavoidable point of reference for those who deal with German Idealism. It certainly hits the mark, but perhaps presents too radical an alternative between the two terms.[1]

The discourse on the tragic always entails a double valence and, one could say, a basic contradiction: on the one hand, the search for the essence of the tragic aims at defining a structure of thought or a fundamental experience that transcends tragedies in their concrete formal and historical configuration. On the other

* Università degli studi del Molise (IT), giovanna.pinna@unimol.it

[1] P. Szondi, *Versuch über das Tragische*, in P. Szondi, *Schriften*, ed. by J. Bollack, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1978, p. 151.

hand, the tragic as a concept is not thinkable without reference to the object of 'tragedy'. This contradiction is particularly evident (and I would add productive) in post-Kantian aesthetic thought, which not only conceives of art as a way of understanding the rational content of the world, but in systematic terms integrates art history into aesthetics.

In fact, the idealistic aesthetics of tragedy do not coincide with the speculative theory of the tragic, although in a sense they presuppose it. Neither, however, are they equated with poetics as a more or less normative theory of the form of dramatic representation.[2]

The metaphysical speculation on the tragic between the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19thcentury has, in fact, produced an aesthetics of tragedy based on completely new criteria, and at the same time contributed decisively to reconfiguring the dramatic canon on a philosophical basis. It is evident that speculative readings of Greek tragedies – such as that of the *Oedipus Rex* by the young Schelling in his *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* or that of the *Eumenides* and *Antigone* by Hegel – constitute the essential presupposition of aesthetic reflection on tragedy in the proper sense, which however significantly widens the perspective by including also the modern dramatic production, even if with a different emphasis.[3] Thus, Hegel, in his *Aesthetics*, while essentially maintaining the model of conflict elaborated in his article on natural law and in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, treats the tragic phenomenon not as an instrument through which to explain the ethical world or as a prefiguration of the dialectical unfolding of the spirit, but rather as a historically determined sensuous expres-

[2] The question of the specificity of the aesthetics of tragedy with respect to the philosophy of the tragic is discussed in Ch. Menke, 'The aesthetics of Tragedy. Romantic perspectives', in J. Billings, M. Leonard (eds.), *Tragedy and the idea of modernity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, pp. 42-58. See also R. Galle, 'Tragik, tragisch', in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, vol. 6, Metzler, Weimar 2005, pp. 157-165 and Th. Martinec, *Von der Tragödientheorie zur Philosophie des Tragischen*, in "Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft", 49, 2005, pp. 105-128.

[3] On Schelling's interpretation of the *Oedipus Rex* see, in addition to Szondi, *Versuch über das Tragische*, cit., pp. 157-161, L. Hühn, 'Die Philosophie des Tragischen. Schellings „Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus"', in J. Jantzen (ed.), *Die Realität des Wissens und das wirkliche Dasein. Erkenntnisbegründung und Philosophie des Tragischen beim frühen Schelling*, Frommann, Stuttgart 1998, pp. 95-128. On the formation of Hegel's philosophy of tragic see M. Schulte, *Zur Beziehung von Ethik und Tragödientheorie bei Hegel*, in "Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie", 45, 1997, pp. 711-740 and M. de Beistegui, 'Hegel: or the Tragedy of Thinking', in M. de Beistegui, S. Sparks (eds.), *Philosophy and Tragedy*, Routledge, London-New York 2000, pp. 11-37. On Hegel's reading of *Antigone* and its theoretical consequences see D.J. Schmidt, *On Germans and other Greeks. Tragedy and Ethical Life*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington-Indianapolis 2001, and M. Donougho, *The Woman in White: On the Reception of Hegel's Antigone*, in "The Owl of Minerva" 21, 1, 1989, pp. 65-89.

sion of the idea. In his lectures on philosophy of art (1802-1803), Schelling relates the tragic conflict to the idea of artistic beauty. Here, the figure of the hero who succumbs to fate blamelessly and affirms his freedom by voluntarily accepting punishment, lying at the center of his interpretation of the *Oedipus Rex*, becomes the symbolic representation of the relationship between what is finite and what is infinite in the work of art. "Since freedom and necessity are the highest expressions of that particular antithesis upon which all art is based, the highest manifestation of art is thus the one in which necessity is victorious without freedom succumbing, and in the reverse fashion in which freedom triumphs without necessity being overcome".[4] The focus lies on the identity of opposites resulting from the mutual negation of the two conflicting terms. In the framework of Schelling's speculative conception of poetic genres, tragedy has a paradigmatic function because it makes the ontological structure of artistic beauty visible symbolically, that is, on the level of content. This gives to tragedy a higher aesthetic value than to lyric poetry and epic, in which the conflict is unilaterally resolved, respectively, in the interiority of the subject or in the objectivity of the events depicted.

It can be said that the Idealistic-Romantic aesthetics of tragedy are triggered by the intersection of the theoretical core of the interest in the negative with the Kantian conception of the sublime, which Schiller had first applied to the tragic phenomenon. The concepts of the pathetic sublime (*Pathetischerhabene*) and the sublime of action (*Erhabene der Handlung*) mark the transition from the reflection on aesthetic subjectivity to the reflection on the structure of the tragic event. Starting from the question of the pleasure provoked by tragic objects, Schiller had in fact integrated the moral component of the Kantian sublime and its antithetical structure into a conception of tragedy serving as a representation of a condition of suffering provoked by the moral nature of the individual itself.[5]

It is from the philosophy of the tragic that the common element of the theories of tragedy set forth in the critical writings of the Schlegel brothers and in the aesthetic lectures of Schelling, Hegel, and Solger derives: the idea that tragic representation is centered on the dialectical collision between opposing principles, not on the grief caused by a misfortune or by incoercible and destructive pas-

[4] F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, in F.W.J. Schelling, *Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. by Ch. Binckelmann, II, 6, Frommann, Stuttgart 2018, p. 368; Eng. trans. by D.W. Stott, *The Philosophy of Art*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press 1989, p. 249.

[5] The relevance of Schiller's conception of the tragic sublime for Schelling and Schlegel is stressed by J. Billings, *The Genealogy of the Tragic*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2014, pp. 80-97.

sions. Of course, this collision takes on different configurations. It is understood as an opposition between freedom and necessity by Schelling and the Romantics, between equally legitimate ethical instances whose annihilation leads to a higher conciliation by Hegel, and between the finiteness of individual existence and its absolute foundation by Solger. But in all cases, it entails attributing an entirely secondary role to the analysis of the subject's emotional states, desires, and psychophysical turmoil in the dramatic construction.[6]

In the following pages I will examine the relationship between theory and the dramatic canon in the Idealistic aesthetics of tragedy. My aim is to show that Idealist philosophers and Romantic critics concur in constructing a unitary model of the tragic conflict that is partly defined through its contraposition to the 'Senecan' conception of tragedy as a representation of suffering and as a dialectic of passions. Seneca here stands for an entire line of European dramaturgy, culminating in French Classicism, in which the negativity that produces the mournful outcome is rooted in the inner self of the tragic hero and is not redeemed by the affirmation of a superior ethical or metaphysical instance. For the German Idealists, this conception of the tragic is opposed to the paradigm of 'Attic' tragedy they follow.

2. *Aesthetic Theory and The Tragic Canon*

The close interconnection between aesthetic theory and philosophy of history in post-Kantian thinkers results in a certain ambivalence in the very definition of tragedy as an artistic form. On the one hand, the question about the status of modernity tends to draw a line of demarcation between ancient tragedy and modern drama, essentially connecting the idea of the tragic in the strict sense to Attic tragedy. For Hegel, for instance, the modern world lacks the spiritual conditions originating the dialectical core of the tragic conflict, namely the identification of the individual with an ethical totality, and the idea of destiny. Solger, whose reflections on tragedy originate in his activity as a translator of Sophocles, seeks instead to trace a conceptual model equally applicable to ancient and modern

[6] The focus on conflict, which places the idealistic theory of tragedy in a line of continuity with the Aristotelian doctrine of the centrality of mythos, has often been criticized with the argument that it produces a kind of sterilization of the sense of the tragic event, since it does not capture its authentic character, which is performative, emotional and musical. See for example K.-H. Bohrer, *Das Tragische. Erscheinung, Pathos, Klage*, Hanser, München 2009, pp. 11-16.

tragedy.[7] On the other hand, the integration of art history into the systematic structure of aesthetics, from Schelling's *Philosophy of Art* to Hegel's Berlin lectures on aesthetics, presupposes the establishment of a canon of dramatic literature based on philosophical criteria, as well as devoting considerable attention to modern dramatists such as Shakespeare and Calderón up to contemporary authors such as Goethe and Schiller. The identification of the tragic with the Sophoclean model does not exclude, as we shall see, the attribution of the label 'tragic' to modern works as well. However, the focus on the inner conflict of the subject makes its application to the interpretation of tragedies such as *Hamlet* or *King Lear* problematic, especially in the case of Hegel.

As is well known, a major role in the creation of such a dramatic canon is played by the Schlegel brothers, whose critical analysis has strongly influenced the aesthetic approach to the tragic phenomenon.[8] This is one of the most significant cases of interaction and mutual influence between Early Romanticism and Idealism, notwithstanding the basic differences regarding the conception of the relationship between art and philosophical knowledge. A cursory comparison of Friedrich's Jena writings and August Wilhelm's *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* with the main systematic aesthetic writings of German idealism, those of Schelling, Hegel, and Solger, is enough to see that these authors refer to the same corpus of dramatic texts and take very similar positions on tragedy. Now, by definition, literary canons establish scales of values and are characterized equally by presences and exclusions. Since 'omnis de-

[7] Solger's translation of Sophocles' works appeared in 1808 (*Des Sophokles Tragödien*, Leipzig). He deals with tragedy in his *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* and especially in the long review of August Wilhelm Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, appeared in 1818 in the "Wiener Jahrbücher für Literatur" and reprinted in Solger's *Nachgelassene Schriften* (1826). Hegel pays particular attention to this work, to which he already refers in the *Philosophy of Right*, in his review of the *Nachgelassene Schriften* (1828). See G. Pinna, 'Constelaciones berlinesas. Controversias estéticas entre el idealismo y el romanticismo', in F. Oncina Coves (ed.), *Historia conceptual y metodo de las constelaciones*, Pre-Textos, Valencia 2017, pp. 73-90.

[8] As is well known, Friedrich Schlegel's aesthetic reflection is entrusted to a large number of fragmentary texts and materials published posthumously, while August Wilhelm is responsible for a series of lecture courses, published and immediately translated into the major European languages, which extensively expound the aesthetic principles and theory of literature elaborated in collaboration with his brother. Here I stick to the current practice of considering the positions of the two regarding the conception of tragedy as a unitary model although, as I will say later, a more articulated position emerges from Friedrich's notes, also regarding Euripides. On the topic E. Behler, 'Die Theorie der Tragödie in der deutschen Frühromantik', in R. Brinkmann (ed.), *Romantik in Deutschland*, Metzler, Stuttgart 1978, pp. 572-583. On Friedrich Schlegel's position D. Messlin, *Antike und Moderne. Friedrich Schlegels Poetik, Philosophie und Lebenskunst*, De Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2011, pp. 332-341.

terminatio est negatio', exclusions and devaluations provide significant indications regarding the boundaries of the idealistic aesthetics of tragedy and also the internal differences within this area itself.

A first distinction emerges already in the definition of the triad of the great Athenian tragedians: the tragedies of Euripides are attributed a lesser aesthetic quality than those of Sophocles and Aeschylus. In the architecture of the tragic canon, designed by Schlegel on the model of the development of Greek sculpture established by Winckelmann, Aeschylus in his archaic severity represents the origin, Sophocles the harmonic perfection and Euripides the phase of decadence.[9]

Although with some fluctuations, Friedrich's fragmentary writings and August Wilhelm's lectures agree in motivating their negative judgment on Euripides through his depowering of the idea of fate, his tendency to introduce sophistical arguments that relativize the moral meaning of actions and, above all, his representation of passions not related to ethical values, such as love.[10] Amorous passion "can only be stretched out to a tragic passion", Friedrich Schlegel asserts, "through the use of ugly, immoral, and fantastic adjuncts".[11] Love, Friedrich adds, is absent even from the best modern tragedies. The implicit reference is to tragedies centered on female characters like Phaedra or Medea. In Phaedra's case fate plays a secondary role and incest is not unconscious as in the case of Oedipus, and Medea uses magic and infanticide to avenge betrayed love. The main argument against Euripides' dramaturgy is that it displays elements such as physical and psychological suffering, lamentation, and the weakness of individual characters, which create a state of emotional turmoil in the viewer but are not redeemed by cogent moral reasons.[12]

[9] See A.W. Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, ed. by G.V. Amoretti, Schröder, Leipzig 1923, vol. 1, pp. 64-65; Eng. trans. by J. Black, *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, John Bell and Sons, London 1894, pp. 113-116. On the romantic construction of the tragic triad and its reference to Winckelmann see G. Most, *Schlegel, Schlegel und die Geburt eines Tragödienparadigmas*, in "Poetica", 25, 1993, pp. 155-175.

The contraposition of Aeschylus and Euripides was already a topic in ancient literary criticism. Cf. for instance R. Hunter, *Critical Moments in Classical Literature. Studies in the Ancient View of Literature and its Uses*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, p. 47.

[10] E. Behler, *A.W. Schlegel and the Ninetheent-Century* Damnatio *of Euripides*, in "Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies", 27, 4, 1986, pp. 335-367.

[11] F. Schlegel, *Über das Studium der Griechischen Poesie*, in *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, ed. by E. Behler *et al.*, vol. 1, p. 319 f.; Eng. trans. by S. Barnett, *On the Study of Greek Poetry*, SUNY Press, New York 2001, p. 72 f.

[12] Elsewhere Friedrich Schlegel notes that the attention to the inner complexity of the subject as well as his inclination to reason is what brings Euripides closer to the reflexivity of modern art. See *Kritische Friedrich Schlegel Ausgabe*, ed. by E. Behler *et*

In his *Lectures on Dramatic Art*, August Wilhelm Schlegel puts forward a version of the fundamental conflict on which tragic representation is based that summarizes Schiller's idea of the sublime resistance to an external violence and Schelling's Oedipus' paradox: "Inward liberty and external necessity are the two poles of the tragic world. It is only by contrast with its opposite that each of these ideas is brought into full manifestation".[13] The self-determination of the tragic subject is affirmed through its dominion over his or her animal component, or through the struggle against a superior power that cannot be "mere natural necessity but one lying beyond the world of self in the abyss of infinitude".[14] Beyond Schlegel's interest in the compositional structure of tragic works, the premise of his historical-critical reconstruction of tragic literature is therefore philosophical: a work is called tragic if in it the moral foundation of the subject is manifested through an inescapable struggle with external necessity. Schelling, whose innovative reading of the *Oedipus Rex* was formulated within the framework of a theoretical-metaphysical argumentation in the properly aesthetic context of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art*, elaborated in close contact with the Schlegels in Jena, visibly depends on their critical judgment on dramatic works, including the negative evaluation of Euripides' tragedies. According to Schelling, Euripides had put aside "the high ethical atmosphere" that characterized the work of Aeschylus and Sophocles, aiming to produce on the spectator a "material emotion or feeling wedded more with suffering": not a catharsis of the passions but their exaltation.[15] What Ernst Behler calls the "*damnatio* of Euripides" is motivated by the presence in his plays of a sensual pathos produced by the detailed depiction of emotions and their bodily manifestations. In particular, the motif of bodily suffering is considered as an entirely subordinate component of tragic event, even in cases where "is the basis of the collision", as Hegel says about Euripides' *Alcestis* and Sophocles' *Philoctetes*.[16] On the same line is Schelling's interpretation of the Aeschylean *Prometheus*, which in the *Philosophie der Kunst* is defined as "the archetype of the highest human character and thus the true archetype of tragedy".[17] Emphasizing that the suffering of Prometheus is not a suffering

al., vol. 16, p. 314.

[13] Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, cit., p. 51; Eng. trans., p. 67.

[14] *Ibid*.

[15] Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, cit., p. 383; Eng. trans., p. 262.

[16] G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, vol. 13 (Ästhetik I), Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1978, p. 269; Eng. trans. by T.M. Knox, *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1975, p. 206.

[17] Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst*, cit., p. 383; Eng. trans., p. 262.

of the body, but an inner suffering caused by the sense of injustice due to the submission to which the tyrannical power of Zeus forces him, Schelling wants to reiterate that the essence of tragedy concerns the moral constitution of the individual, the resistance of the spirit that overcomes natural necessity while succumbing to it. This is a vision of the tragic hero that incorporates the Stoic component of Schiller's early writings on tragedy and the sublime, but at the same time places it within a metaphysical questioning of the concept of freedom.

However, the centrality of dark feelings and of the irrational in the tragic plot, which correlates with the representation of the intrinsic fragility of the subject, is at the origin of a much more radical *damnatio*, that of Seneca, an author who had had an enormous influence on the development of European dramatic theater since the Renaissance, and without whom Shakespeare, Calderón and the *tragédie classique* are unthinkable. This influence is indeed recognized, but in purely negative terms. Seneca is charged with being responsible for the transformation of the natural individuality of the Greek tragic heroes into abstract characters "that may count more or less as mere personifications of specific passions – love, honour, fame, ambition, tyranny, etc"..[18]

Seneca's works deal with Greek mythological materials, of which, however, they no longer share the religious-institutional foundation. They are centered on the verbal articulation of the emotional states of the characters. The intent of the tragic representation is, in a sort of inverted mirror of the Stoic doctrine of the control of passions, the exploration of the nature of emotions, especially negative ones such as anger, jealousy, revenge. In this 'plot of the human soul' there is not a simple dynamic of cause and effect between passion and action, but rather a process with different steps, in which there is not only moral reason that opposes passion, but a complex interaction between conflicting passions, judgment and reason. The reasoning moved by anger contributes, for example, to determine the cruelty of the outcome, as in the case of Medea.[19] For the Stoics, tragedy is the result of the failure of judgment and the prevalence of negative affections over positive ones. The underlying interest in the psychology of action results in a rhetorical development of the conflicting motivations, both irrational and rational, of action and the psychopathic traits of the characters.[20] The condemnation

[18] Hegel, Ästhetik III, cit., p. 560; Eng. trans., p. 1227.

[19] See G.A. Staley, *Seneca and the Idea of Tragedy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2010, p. 80 f.

[20] See J. Young, *The Philosophy of Tragedy*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2013, p. 52 f.

of this type of tragedy by the Romantics and Idealists is unanimous and results in the expulsion of Seneca from the canon of dramatic authors. August Wilhelm's judgement on the Roman author is unquestionable: Seneca is rhetorical, brutal in the representation of suffering, abstract in the definition of characters, poorly effective in the construction of dramatic action. Rhetoric, in the negative sense of pompous and redundant speech, is for Schlegel the defining feature of Seneca's dramaturgy: his plays, he says, relate to the Attic tragedies as "empty hyperbole against the deepest truth".[21]

Similarly, in the *Lectures on Aesthetics* Hegel states that "the tragic figures in Italian and French drama […] relate the motives of their actions as well as the degree and kind of their feelings with great declamatory splendor and much rhetorical skill, but this way of explaining themselves reminds us more of Seneca's failures than of the Greek dramatic masterpieces".[22] By opposing the "ethically justified pathos" of the heroes of Aeschylus and Sophocles to "the sentimental and personal rhetoric" and "the sophistry of passion" which constitutes the legacy of the Senecan model in modern tragedy, namely in Corneille and Racine, Hegel not only expresses an aesthetic judgement but also a critique of the underlying formalistic Stoic conception of the moral subject.[23]

Precisely Racine, in Michael Silk's words "the elephant in the room" of the idealistic theory of tragedy, is taken by August Wilhelm Schlegel as an example of the distance between tragedy centered on the analysis of the passions and tragedy based on a moral conflict.[24] In the *Comparaison entre la Phèdre de Racine et celle d'Euripide*, published in 1807, he gives a comparative analysis of the *Phèdre*, which two years earlier had been brought to the German stage in a new translation by Schiller, and of Euripides' *Hippolytus*.[25] Curiously, the previously criticized Euripides here represents the positive pole of the comparison: the worst of the Greeks is still better than the French.

But apart from these considerations, dating back to Lessing and based on the construction of the German cultural identity in an anti-French key, Schlegel's criticism here also moves from a philosophical standpoint. The conflict between freedom and necessity, according to Schlegel, means that the outcome of the action proceeds from

[21] Schlegel, *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, cit., p. 193; Eng. trans., p. 165.

[22] Hegel, Ästhetik III, cit., p. 560 f.; Eng. trans., p. 1227.

[23] Hegel, Ästhetik III, cit., p. 546; Eng. trans., p. 1215.

[24] M. Silk, 'Epilogue', in J. Billings, M. Leonard (eds.), *Tragedy and the Idea of Modernity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, pp. 306-313, here p. 311.

[25] A.W. Schlegel, *Comparaison entre la Phèdre de Racine et celle d'Euripide (et d'autres textes)*, ed. by J.-M. Valentin, Artois Presses Université, Arras 2013, pp. 105-183.

the impossibility of reconciling an absolute moral instance, in the case of Phaedra's story the prohibition of incest, with an irrepressible impulse, the love passion which in the Greek Phaedra has a character of necessity because it is imposed by Aphrodite. In Euripides' Hippolytus it is the struggle between two goddesses, Aphrodite and Artemis, that provides the framework for the conflict, as well as its character of necessity: Phaedra is the instrument Aphrodite uses to punish the chaste Hippolytus, whose rejection of sensual love manifests his exclusive devotion to Artemis. Racine eliminates this frame of reference, thus shifting the focus to Phaedra's psychological condition as the motor of the action. A similar operation had already been carried out by Seneca, whom Racine mentions in his preface, with the deletion of Aphrodite's speech in the proem and Artemis' reconciliatory intervention at the end. In Schlegel's view, this undermines the element of fate, or necessity, which is essential to the tragic dialectic. But the main defect of Racine's tragedy consists in having put in the background the seriousness of the immorality of the protagonist's love for her stepson by minimizing the reference to incest in such a way as to shift the focus to the inner torment of a morally unworthy figure. In his re-elaboration of the plot, Racine brings into play another 'low' passion, jealousy, by introducing the figure of Aricia. This substantially contributes to marginalizing the role of Hippolytus, for Schlegel the only authentically tragic figure, who in Euripides succumbs because he tries to defend his chastity. In a moralising tone, he deplores the loss of centrality of the heroic (one might say masculine) ethos, which adds to the ambiguous characterisation of Theseus, "héros presque divin", described as potentially unfaithful and certainly as incapable of judging correctly.

For Schlegel, according to whom what determines the tragic effect is not the representation of a suffering resulting from an inner fragility of the subject but the emergence of the moral component of the human being through the suppression of its naturalness, this type of dramaturgy does not really succeed in producing a genuinely aesthetic effect. He describes it with a terminology that once again recalls Schiller's concept of the pathetic sublime:

> "Non, ce n'est pas le spectacle de la souffrance qui fait l'attrait d'une tragédie […]. Je crois que ce qui, dans une belle tragédie, fait ressortir une certaine satisfaction du fond de notre sympathie avec les situations violentes et les peines représentées, c'est, ou le sentiment de la dignité de la nature humaine, éveillé dans nous par de grands modèles, ou la trace d'un ordre de choses surnature".[26]

Schlegel's critique of Racine is based on an essentially anti-psy-

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

chological conception of subjectivity, common to Idealistic aesthetics. Tragic action questions the subject as a moral entity seeking to assert its freedom against the limitations of objectivity. The tragic character is therefore required to be a substantial unity, which in the ancient world is expressed through the identification of the individual with a social or religious norm, in the modern world through the consistency of character. And on a (true or alleged) moral connotation of character as an expression of the autonomy of the subject with respect to naturalness, that is, to the passions, is based the inclusion of modern authors such as Shakespeare, Calderón and Schiller into the tragic canon of the Idealists.

3. *Pathos and Character*

"Pathos forms the proper center, the true domain of art", we read in Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*.[27] But what does Hegel mean by pathos? In its broadest sense, it refers to the fact that the knowledge of the absolute in art takes shape through the feeling of the subject. It assumes, however, a peculiar meaning in relation to tragedy. To the concept of pathos Hegel devotes particular attention in the section "Action" (*Handlung*) of the general part of the *Aesthetics* and takes it up again in the section on dramatic literature. In general, action is the determinacy of the ideal considered in its process of differentiation in itself and of resolution of this difference. Since for Hegel, art as a form of the absolute spirit is nothing but the sensuous manifestation of the ideal, the action as an expression of the dynamic essence of the human subject, of his spiritual interests, of his volitions and passions is the essential content (*Gehalt*) of artistic representation. In a dramatic work, the action becomes the theme of representation and determines the very form of discourse. Hence the position of pre-eminence accorded to drama with respect to other forms of artistic expression. If we look at the concrete configuration of content, the action takes its starting point from the opposition of the individual to a given situation, or from a collision with other subjects. In Greek tragedy, the motivation to act is given by a moral conviction accompanied by an emotional adhesion that transforms pure principle into concrete choice. This is what Hegel calls tragic pathos: the self-identification of an individual with an ethical principle that informs his or her character.[28]

[27] Hegel, Ästhetik I, cit., p. 302; Eng. trans., p. 232

[28] Hegel's concept of pathos certainly expresses a close relationship between aesthetics and ethics, which has its origin in the analysis of the *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology*. But

What we want to underline here is that this peculiar use of the term pathos (which in Aristotle designates the action that produces the mournful event and therefore the tragic effect) implies first of all a distancing from the pathetic-emotional interpretation of the tragic phenomenon. In fact, Hegel makes it clear that he considers the translation of the term as 'passion' to be inadequate because of the connotations of passivity and irrationality that are normally associated with it: "Pathos in this sense is inherently justified power over the heart, an essential content of rationality and freedom of will".[29] Tragic pathos should therefore be distinguished from passion ('Leidenschaft') understood as submission to the natural order, a condition that humans have in common with animals. On the contrary, pathos concerns "the great themes of art, the eternal religious and ethical relationships; family, country, state, church, fame, friendship, class, dignity, and, in the romantic world, especially honour and love".[30] Insofar as it springs from the values that regulate intersubjective relations, it is ethically and rationally founded. Contrasting, but equally legitimate *pathe* are Antigone's love for her brother and Creon's loyalty to the laws of the city.

Hegel speaks of "objective pathos" in connection with the heroes of the Attic tragedy, since the sentiment of the individual is totally penetrated by the moral option in the name of which they act. In this type of pathos, there is no manifestation of a contrast between the condition of suffering of the individual and the character that acts in order to assert its autonomy: feeling and will of the subject coincide. For this reason, in the heroic universe of Classical tragedy there is no discrepancy between intention and action. The heroes do not succumb because of a voluntary breaking of the divine order, but because of the fatal one-sidedness of the principle that the single individual represents. There is instead a subjective pathos, prevalent in modern literature, that "belongs rather to a casual particular passion" and is used by "poets who intend to move our personal feelings by touching scenes".[31] Forcing the argument somewhat, Hegel applies the dialectical scheme derived from the *Antigone* (the collision of two opposing principles whose mutual annihilation produces a feeling of reconciliation) also

there is for Hegel no "pathos of the artist" that "experiences himself to be the essence of the fear of death", as Paul Cobben argues. In Hegelian aesthetics it is not, as is well known, a matter of the subjectivity of the artist, but of the infinite subjectivity that takes shape in artistic representation. See P. Cobben, 'Hegel's Concept of Pathos as the Keeper oft he marriage between Aesthetics and Ethics', in S. Simons (ed.), *The Marriage of Aesthetics and Ethics*, Brill, Leiden 2015, pp. 95-109.

[29] Hegel, Ästhetik I, cit., p. 301; Eng. trans., p. 232.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 286; Eng. trans., p. 220.

[31] Hegel, Ästhetik III, cit., p. 493-94; Eng. trans., p. 1173.

to the interpretation of Euripides' *Hippolytus*: Hippolytus, animated by the pathos of purity, succumbs guiltlessly to the violence of love that he rejects.[32] The one-sidedness of Hippolytus' pathos, inspired by Diana, is destined to succumb to the negative power of eros unleashed against him by Aphrodite. Significantly, Hegel contrasts Euripides' play with Racine's modern version of the story with the same arguments as Schlegel, noting that in the latter, the introduction of the character of Aricia, for whose sake Hippolytus rejects Phaedra, lowers the pathos to simple amorous passion. For Schlegel, the analysis of Phaedra's subjectivity, on which Racine's work hinges, is essentially anti-tragic because it lacks an authentically moral foundation (in the Kantian sense); for Hegel, it is at once psychological and metaphysical, in a word, anti-political.

In addition to drawing a clear line between tragedy as a representation of conflict and tragedy as an analysis of the passions, these considerations call into question two other junctures in the aesthetics of the tragic: the effect produced on the spectator and the applicability of the scheme drawn from Attic tragedy to the modern world. Put in a different way, firstly, what role does reception play in an aesthetics of content, and secondly, is a modern tragedy possible?

Regarding the first point, one can observe that in the paragraphs specifically dedicated to tragedy in the lectures on aesthetics Hegel makes an explicit reference to the Aristotelian tradition, in regard both to the definition of drama as a representation of actions, and to the concepts of fear and pity (*Furcht*, *Mitleid*). The ability to provoke an emotional participation in the spectator is an indication that the representation adequately expresses the tragic principle. This happens if the suffering touches, so to speak, a universal chord, that is, according to Hegel, if it brings into play recognized ethical values: "true pity […] is sympathy at the same time with the sufferer's moral justification, with the affirmative aspect, the substantive thing that must be present in him.[33] Since subjective pathos is connected to the modern conception of the moral self, characterized by the disjunction between the individual and the abstract structure of the state, the tragic principle would seem to be precluded from modern artistic representation. In fact, Hegel's position, which in principle draws a clear distinction between an-

[32] G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, vol. 17, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1978, p.133. See on this point U. Port, *Pathosformeln. Die Tragödie und die Geschichte exaltierter Affekte* (1755-1886), Fink, München 2005, pp. 197-199.

[33] Hegel, Ästhetik III, cit., p. 526; Eng. trans., p. 1198. On the distinction between objective and subjective pathos see Ästhetik III, cit., p. 494; Eng. trans., p. 1173.

cient tragedy and modern drama, appears much more nuanced in the concrete analysis of the works. An example of this is his consideration of Schiller's plays. While in his early writing on the *Wallenstein* he had criticized the lack of a reconciliatory solution to the conflict (Wallenstein's end had not seemed tragic to him but only repugnant), in his lectures on aesthetics he states that the figures in Schiller's works express "the pathos of a great mind". The reason for this 'revaluation' of Schiller's dramas, including the *Wallenstein*, lies in the fact that they focus on "great universal aims", making the heroic dimension of the character prevail over the inner contrasts and individual passions. The tragic nature of the action in Wallenstein's case consists in the impossibility for the individual to emerge victorious from the clash with the complexity of power relations. This, according to Hegel, although in the changed spiritual conditions of modernity, recalls the scheme of the collision of Greek tragedy, placing at the heart of the play the contrasts within a political order.

But although Schiller in his late works seems to approach a Classical pathos, in his tragedies, as in those of Shakespeare, the individual character remains the key motive. Indeed, Hegel reconfigures the tragic collision based on the concept of character, which correlates with the idea of the absolute freedom of the modern subject.[34] In modern dramatic works, which Hegel does not hesitate to call tragedies, the conflict is often internal to the character of the individual. Confronted with different options, the figures of modern tragedy act according to inclination, and circumstances end up bringing to light what lies at the core of their inner character.

In a paradigmatic work of modernity such as the *Hamlet*, Hegel argues, there is a collision similar to that in *Choephoroi* (*Libation Bearers*) or *Electra*. However, while in the ancient examples the killing of Agamemnon and the revenge of Orestes are both acts attributable to an ethical motivation, Hamlet is faced with a crime provoked by simple ambition: "Therefore the collision turns strictly here not on a son's pursuing an ethically justified revenge and being forced in the process to violate the ethical order, but in Hamlet's character".[35] The conflict does not concern the legitimacy of the action, but the ability to carry out a decision.

For the Idealists, Hamlet generally represents a key figure for the definition of the essence of modern tragedy. In a way not very

[34] On Hegel's attitude to modern tragedy see T. Pinkard, 'Tragedy with and without Religion', in J. Billings, M. Leonard (eds.), *Tragedy and the Idea of Modernity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, pp. 137-158.

[35] Hegel, Ästhetik III, cit., p. 559; Eng. trans., pp. 1225-1226.

different from Hegel, Solger identifies the fundamental motive of the play in the impossibility of reconciling the obsessive desire to perform a heroic action with the doubt that the action can still correspond to the ideal meaning from which it moves, and with the fact that ultimately the order can only be disrupted. The hero's inaction stems from the terror of staining the purity, "the moral value, so to speak, still virgin", of his intention with the relativism and one-sidedness that the completed action necessarily entails.[36] The elevation of Hamlet's character, which is what would drive him to the heroic act, and the moral cowardice that partly weighs on his actions, have the same root.

For both Hegel and Solger, the question is: what is the genuinely tragic element of this inner struggle? The moment of reconciliation, which for Hegel is the necessary outcome of the tragic dialectic, lies in the recognition of a necessity of the catastrophe which is, so to speak, subjective. According to Hegel, the sadness that seizes us in front of the succumbing of "fine minds, noble in themselves" as Hamlet or Juliet to the accidentality of circumstances produces a feeling of reconciliation because we perceive a "necessary correspondence between the external circumstances and what the inner nature of those fine characters really is".[37] It is, however, a painful reconciliation, certainly more problematic for Hegel than the one involving "firm characters" such as Macbeth, whose passions are aimed at self-affirmation in the sphere of ethical-political life. As Solger observes, the displacement of tragic conflict into interiority, of which Hamlet represents the exemplary image, makes the passions play a decisive role in modern tragedy. However, he does not intend to dismiss the dialectical paradigm of the idealistic metaphysics of the tragic. In fact, he points out that "these motives (i.e., passions) are not to be transformed into the interesting since they are conceived as the universal".[38]

In this way, he completely overshadows "Hamlet's archetypally Stoic struggle with πάθος" through which he articulates the dilemma of his own position and action.[39] The same is done by the Schlegels, Shakespeare's champions in German culture. The exclusion of the interesting ('das Interessante'), i.e. the psychological articulation of indi-

[36] K.W.F. Solger, *Nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel*, ed. by L. Tieck and F. von Raumer, Leipzig 1826, vol. 2, p. 587.

[37] Hegel, Ästhetik III, cit., p. 566; Eng. trans., p.1231.

[38] K.W.F. Solger, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik*, ed. by G. Pinna, Meiner, Hamburg 2017, p. 138. The term interesting (which recalls by antithesis the Kantian conception of disinterested pleasure) indicates a type of attractiveness that addresses the inclinations of the individual person. See *Ibid.*, p. 130

[39] On the influence of Seneca's dramaturgy and the confrontation with Stoic ethics in *Hamlet* see R.S. Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy. The Influence of Seneca*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1992, pp. 53-67.

vidual motivations for action, is what marks the distance here from an aesthetics of the passions. For the Idealists, what determines the value and consequently the aesthetic effect of a tragic work is its ability to make manifest its intellectual content, that is, the dialectic between the universal and the particular lying at the basis of the dramatic mechanism. The terms of this dialectic are understood differently by the authors mentioned, but what unites the positions is the idea of tragedy as a sublime paradox, not as a stage for the darkness of the soul.

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The Absolute Perspective of the Personal Subject Hegel vs. Plato on Social Philosophy, Art, and Religion

di Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer*

Abstract
Normally, we focus on objective matters, not on performances in apperception and judgment. High-level reflections on ourselves also tend to look *sideways-on* upon us as 'individual objects' – thus overlooking the basic facts of subjectivity, perspectivity, and temporal actuality in all our relations to the world. Hegel, who had realized this, is nevertheless widely attacked by defenders of 'methodological individualism' as defending a version of Platonic idealism and holism, claiming, allegedly, a higher existence of conceptual forms to empirical appearances. However, not Ancient Greek philosophy, but Christian religion and medieval art show us the absoluteness of subjectivity in performing a personal life, as Hegel argues in his criticism of Plato's 'collectivist' and 'conventional virtue, thus agreeing in part with Karl Popper. The highest dignity of human individuals thus results from free orientations at traditional and general wisdom, together with the insight, that all objectivity is relative to perspectival changes.

Keywords
Personality, Individualism, Objectivity, Perspectivity, Subjectivity

1. *Background and Topic*

It is a 'natural' stance to the world to focus on an allegedly subject-independent reality by 'looking through' our seemingly transparent representations, ignoring all conceptual mediations and 'meta-level' reflections. Hegel as the 'great foe of immediacy' (Wilfrid Sellars) is the first critic of this naivety not only in an empiricist, but also in any metaphysical (materialist or Platonist) 'myth of the given',[1] namely by radicalizing Kant's transcendental analysis of implicitly presupposed forms in our knowledge-claims and beliefs. The first step consists in reading Kant's "Ding an sich" just as a

* Universität Leipzig (DE), stekeler@uni-leipzig.de

[1] W. Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, in H. Feigl and M. Scriven (eds.), *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. 1, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1956, §§1, 14, pp. 253-329 (repr. in W. Sellars, *Science, Perception, and Reality*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1963).

new version of Spinoza's "substance", which, in turn, is nothing but the whole world, looked upon *side-ways on* (John McDowell),[2] in a *view from nowhere* (Thomas Nagel),[3] or from a counterfactual standpoint of an all-knowing God, placed at the end of all times. In a second step, Hegel sees that Thomas Hobbes's (and David Hume's) proposals just to talk about atomic individuals, to avoid all figurative speech and to cut off all generic, holistic or speculative sentences as allegedly superfluous 'metaphysics' by Occam's razor, makes full logical reflection on *presupposed domains* for our distinctions of species of things and entities impossible. Contrary to the assumptions of logical atomism, any object and any subject stand in indefinite many relations to virtually 'all' other things – such that we implicitly refer to an *indefinite totality* of 'always' ongoing processes when we talk about an 'absolute' truth about finite beings in time and space. To replace logical knowledge about this by religious or metaphysical belief is, as Hegel clearly sees, no option. Therefore, he *opposes* F.H. Jacobi's restitution of (theological) metaphysics on the ground of Kant's allowance to *believe* in *freedom, soul,* and *God* as possibilities in a world of speculative thoughts, a *mundus intelligibilis*.

Here, I shall focus on the most important special case, namely on the constitution of the 'spiritual soul' in the sense of a full personal individual in 'all' her relations and attitudes to her being-in-the-world as a member of humankind. The well-known opposition of 'methodological individualism' in the social sciences to Hegelian 'holism' thus shows the deeper reasons why Hegel's reading of religion and art as early versions of our insights into the overall condition of human sapience is not yet understood until today.

2. *Dogmatic Liberalism vs. Conceptual Foundation of Personal Freedom*

Supporters of so-called *methodological individualism* in the social sciences, Joseph Schumpeter, Max Weber, Friedrich August v. Hayek, Jon Elster, but especially Ludwig von Mises and Karl Popper, attack Hegel's philosophy in its *holism* and even see it as *illiberal collectivism*. However, the resulting common opinion overlooks that Hegel elaborates the *absolute status* of the *individual subject*. He even shows how its acknowledgment is part of an ongoing historic revolution in logical and political philosophy on one side, religious thinking and free art on the other.

[2] J. McDowell, *Mind and World*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 1994.
[3] T. Nagel, *The View From Nowhere*, Oxford University Press, New York-Oxford 1986.

The situation gets even more interesting when we see the two sides in Hegel's reaction to Plato's political pedagogics. Hegel *defends* Plato's insights into the conceptual relations between *personality* and *community*: The (frequently merely conventional) *virtue* of a person depends on the overall *constitution* of state and society. However, Hegel sees much clearer than Popper[4] that not only Plato but more or less his whole time did not yet have a proper understanding of *personal subjectivity* as the *absolute* ground for *personal freedom* and *human dignity* – the highest values of *Christian* religion and philosophy.

The enormous gulf between the different 'interpretations' of the difficult texts in Hegel's corpus results from the tensions between two complementary *logical* insights. I call the first the *absoluteness of subjective performance*, the second the *generality of concepts.* According to the first, being as performance – for example of one's own life – is *absolute*, whereas assertions are *relative* with respect to general meaning and particular fulfilment of already canonized ("gesetzt") (truth-)conditions for instantiations of conceptual forms. The fact that concepts are necessary condition of *personal* freedom, mediated by the *communality of reason*, is the second point:[5] Thoughts and free actions of persons that transcend merely enactive (Alva Noë)[6] reaction to present perceptions are *obviously* possible only on the ground of representing *possibilities*, which in turn presupposes the mediation of symbols and words.[7]

In ordinary understanding, especially in the context of "absolute truth", the word "absolute" seems to refer to an immediate view onto the whole world from the side of an all-knowing God, who comes in two versions, a 'physicalist' version of a world-architect and an 'empiricist' version of a Great Historian. In his astounding dialogue dedicated to *Parmenides*, Plato has already argued that even a divine physicist who is supposed to know all lawful relations between forms or concepts would not know *how to apply them* onto the actual appearances of the world in our *doxa*. Merely theoretical, hence only generic, *episteme* still lacks the practical knowledge of how to project it to perceptual

[4] K. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, 2 vols., Routledge, London 1945.

[5] T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology. The Sociality of Reason*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994.

[6] Cf. A. Noë, *Action in perception*, MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 2004.

[7] Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), in *Hegels Werke*, ed. by E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel, vol. 8-10, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1986 (=Enc.), §§ 458-464.

experience.[8] On the other hand, Plato declares clearly enough that his 'historical' God of a Last Judgement in the 10th book of the *Republic* who looks back from eternity to all particular facts is merely a counterfactual myth.[9]

In contrast to these two traditions, Hegel re-reads the word "absolute" together with Fichte and Schelling in the context of Kant's so-called "intellectual intuition", which consist of the power to make, for example, light *just by thinking or saying* "there shall be light". Kant and the Neo-Kantians like Friedrich Albert Lange believe that only God has this ability. The German Idealist see that there really are important cases of *saying so makes it so*. We know this structure of illocutionary performances today from John L. Austin.[10] Mere *declarations*, as I would like to call this *moment* in our speech acts (which are more than mere *locutions*), bring something new into the world – even though the results of these actions frequently do not have all the intended or desired properties.

The consequences of the 'neo-Cartesian' insights of post-Kantian German Idealism cannot be underestimated: They involve that *being* a subject in performances like thinking or walking[11] is *not relative* to the fulfilment of some conditions, for example of true assertions. The *truth of a proposition* p and the existence of the referents of singular terms are *relative* with respect to what is the case in the world at large; but being and living are 'absolute'.[12] An intended content of a declaration in speaking or doing something may not be fulfilled, a claim may be wrong, but the actual performance remains real. As far as I know, it was Fichte, who had understood Descartes's inference "I think" from "I doubt" in this way.

For improving our understanding this logical form, it might be helpful to see that Michael Dummett's interpretation of Gottlob Frege's assertion-sign as expressing *force* in distinction to *content* points into a similar direction. Following Ludwig Wittgenstein, we might rephrase the central insight thus: Not I say that p, but "p"

[8] Plato, *Parmenides* 134 (St.) (Plato, *Werke*, vol. 5, ed. by G. Eigler, Wissenschaftliche Buchhandlung, Darmstadt 1990, p. 222f).

[9] Plato, *Republic* 614ff (St.) (Plato, *Werke*, vol. 4, ed. by Eigler, Wissenschaftliche Buchhandlung, Darmstadt 1990, p. 850ff).

[10] J. R. Austin, *How to do things with words*, ed. by J. O. Urmson, Oxford University Press, London *et al.* 1962. Cf. also J.R. Searle, *Speech acts. An essay in the philosophy of language*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1969.

[11] However, Descartes was not happy with Malebranche's "ambulo ergo sum" in the second example – even though it is also logically true, if we take 'logic' in the right, material, not only formal, syntactic, way.

[12] According to my reading, Martin Heidegger's stress on Being with capital B with its time-structure of present *Dasein* refers precisely to this *logical* insight and is developed in his book *Sein und Zeit* (1927), Niemeyer, Tübingen 2006[19].

says that p.[13] Wittgenstein uses the variable p together with quotation signs for talking about sentences as (repeatable linguistic) forms, not yet about their content – and he avoids Frege's ambivalent assertion stroke.[14] It is, as Wittgenstein shows, the logical deep structure of the sentences that represents meanings. There is no simple soul or subject, as Wittgenstein adds, that could have an 'immediate' access to thoughts or concepts, facts or objects.[15] When I instantiate the sentence-form "p", I say immediately (aloud or silently to myself) "p". In other words, I 'think' only in a mediated way *that p*. Precisely this is already Hegel's point.

The deep logical insight of this obviously in part also 'anti-Cartesian' move is this: The relation between the syntacto-semantic form "p" and its content 'that p' exists only via an institution of general (linguistic) practice. This practice is holistic. It involves variations of saying *essentially the same* in one language or in translations to virtually all human languages. Moreover, we evaluate 'the truth' of an assertion p according to its *relevant differentially conditioned content* in proper coordination of the elements in the sentences on one side, the facts resp. things in the world on the other, as Wittgenstein says in another oracle. Whenever I say "p", the truth condition of the (perhaps silent) consideration, judgement, or assertion *is relative to a communal practice* –and its fulfilment may depend on things and facts in the world to which I refer.

Karl Marx thinks that Hegel believes in some metaphysical spirit behind the scene of history. However, "spirit" is a *formal title* in our reflections on *the whole* of our faculties to know and think. "Perception", "intuition", "intelligence", "rationality" and "reason" are special moments. Cultural history provides us with concepts and laws, norms and rules as parts of the very constitution of mind as subjective spirit, i. e. of being a personal subject.[16] Objective spirit is, in short, the communality of reason as the overall object of reflection in what Hegel calls in the generic singular *science of*

[13] L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1973[9]; Eng. trans. Blackwell, Oxford 1959; (= TLP), No. 5.542: "Es ist aber klar, dass "A glaubt, dass p", "A denkt p", "A sagt p" von der Form ">p< sagt p" sind": "But it is clear that "A believes that p", "A thinks p", "A says p" are of the form ">p< says p"".

[14] In one reading, the assertion stroke says that the writer or speaker *claims* that the following proposition is true, in another it is just a *mark* for *derived* or *proven* mathematical sentences.

[15] Cf. TLP, No. 5.5421. Neither Wittgenstein nor any other philosopher of the 20th century knew that this was precisely Hegel's main point in his philosophical 'psychology', as I shall show in my forthcoming commentary on the core passages of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (under the title *Hegel's Realphilosophie*, Meiner, Hamburg 2022).

[16] Unfortunately, Marx and his followers join Ludwig Feuerbach in attributing to Hegel a belief in mystical we-subjects, not realizing that their own claim that humans make their history is logically of exactly the same logical form of generic reflection.

spirit (Wissenschaft des Geistes). Wilhelm Dilthey will later reduce these "Geisteswissenschaften" in the footsteps of Friedrich Schleiermacher more or less to the 'humanities', i.e. to historical hermeneutics. We better should stick to the tradition according to which "spirit" is the overall title for performative forms of human cooperation, instituted in joint practices. Hegel is aware of the logical problem that we must use the given forms of sentences like 'N is P' and 'N does Q' in talking about generic properties and doings of such communal institutions – and marks this special usage explicitly by the word "speculative". He shows in some detail how to understand such high level, generic reflections properly – even though his audience largely seems to lack the special logical skills needed for this.

3. *From Form to Content: Individual, Subject, and Person*

Sameness of ('inner') content is always of the form of generic generality. The equivalence of different forms (as 'outer' representations) is always much finer than content-equivalence – as we can clearly see when we compare fractions and rational numbers or numerals and integers. However, people tend, instead, to identify content with their own preferred ways of talking – and thus confuse form and content, words and meanings. Heinrich von Kleist and other romantic writers – down to Theodor W. Adorno's love for non-identities – have thought that their inner thoughts were unspeakable and their individual personality were ineffable. Hegel contradicts.

In fact, the presuppositional developments in Hegel's phenomenological reflections lead, at first, from mystifying inner content to outer form, for example from concepts to words – and then back to common content that we can share. Hegel calls the way back "negation of negation". As content-abstraction, it consists in ignoring differences by identifying the relevant equivalence (Gleichgültigkeit) that defines the identity of content – for example in the practice of 'changing perspectives'. This practice lies at the ground of all reference to the same thing. It consists in ignoring *inessential* differences of access and translation. There is no other way to focus on *essentially the same meaning resp. object*. All entities, to which we refer, presuppose a corresponding perspectival change of access,[17] hence a *practical* distinction between (irrelevant) outer forms and (essential) inner contents. Thought as the content of thinking is,

[17] Hegel sees that perspectival change from me to you never means literally to try to see the world with your eyes.

therefore, like all objective matter, in principle common to us all, as Heraclitus already knew.[18] The word "ideal" marks the constitution of generic conceptual truths as default inferences, presupposed in all understanding. The contested label "objective idealism" is just the title for this insight. As a result, we have to revise a traditional picture of Hegel. Dogmatic liberalism assumes in the metaphysical tradition of Cartesian Rationalism an immediately given personal subject or, as in Hobbes's materialist anthropology resp. Locke's 'physiology of understanding' (as Kant critically says), a merely 'natural' development of subjective skills. Hegel sees, instead, that the formation of personal competence is *communal*, not *individual*. Personal formation precedes explicit cooperation between already educated individuals. Such cooperation presupposes that they are already possess the personal faculty to speak and think, plan actions and coordinate behaviour – and understand the relevant equivalence of general content. This, in turn, presupposes an enormous amount of general knowledge of the world.

In contradistinction to the ideas of natural law, the historical emergence and development of states is also already an institutional and conceptual pre-condition not only of lawful order and legal rights, but of free commerce and economical division of labour and exchange of goods. Being a *full* person (or citizen) in the modern sense of the word thus *presupposes* a whole system of instituted forms and norms, including state-structures.

We have, however, to take the words "right" and "state" (from Latin "status") here in a very general meaning. Hegel uses "right" explicitly as a title for all normativity of general entitlements and commitments in relation to virtually all other personal subjects in living and acting together. "State" in its most general sense is a title for the whole system of communal and political, societal and ethical *institutions* or forms of joint practice. Identifying the state with its government would be like identifying the university with its rector and senate. In its widest sense, the state is the framework of ethical life, i. e. of all institutions of *Sittlichkeit*, including language, knowledge, science, law-administration, religion, and art.

Ethical life as the system of all instituted forms of cooperative practices, roles and statuses is the condition of the very possibility of becoming and being a personal subject. We do not grow into autonomous persons as apples grow on trees. We do not jump in full intellectual armour on the earth as Minerva from the head of Jupiter.

Civil society (bürgerliche Gesellschaft) is, according to one of

[18] Cf. Heraklit, *Fragmente*, ed. and trans. by B. Snell, Artemis, Zürich 1995, Nr. 113 and 114.

Hegel's most important insights, the domain of *free interaction of particular individuals with other particular individuals* – in abstraction from all *presupposed* normativity in our personal relations between individuals, from all corresponding state laws and all cultural history. Modern sociology on the lines of Max Weber's methodological individualism wants, like Hobbes, 'to build up' – or 'reconstruct' – societal and state structures on the ground of individual behaviour and action. However, state structures *are already implicit* in the institutional framework and concept of society such that there cannot be a 'contract' between the people and their state, just as there are no contracts in animal life.

The *contractual* interaction between individuals in civil society are of a form that *we legally allow* to use the 'egoistic principles' of 'rational man' in the sense of *homo oeconomicus.*[19] The problem of dogmatic liberalism and its individualism consists in overlooking the fact that there is no free commerce without state-sheltered property – and that a *homo oeconomicus* in private life would belong to what Hegel ironically calls "geistiges Tierreich", *spirited animal kingdom.*

Religion now is, according to Hegel, the earliest form of reflecting self-consciously on these forms of communal practices. Religious liturgies celebrate these forms together with our general being-in-the-world in rites and arts, namely as transcendental conditions of possibility for my, your and our *personal subjectivity* with general spirit or personhood and our actual performances as two moments in our developing and having *personality* as a mixture of competence and status in the community of humankind.

Moreover, personhood is the real content of our traditional ways of talking about "an immortal soul": Religion teaches us that being a *full* person really *transcends* being a merely actual *subject*[20] – which is limited to the perspectival stance of immediate (merely enactive) performances as we share it with animals and their 'autistic' subjectivity.

Not only religious reflection, all art and philosophy uses and must use metaphorical forms, allegories and analogies. Logical analysis does so also, not only when reflecting on the personal form of being human. The main task of higher-level reflection is to make

[19] No incident has made this as clear as the actual Corona pandemic, in which the leading role of state administration for commerce and family life, education and the sciences, religious practices and all art performance shows up.

[20] In Enc. § 552, Hegel writes: "religion appears for self-consciousness as the basis of morality and the state". I would propose to add what is obviously expressed between the lines: this is so *only for* our *reflections*, i. e. when we make the forms of morality and state in corresponding religious narratives explicit.

these semantic forms better understood, by which we talk reflectively about practical forms of leading a personal life.

Like our mathematical models of nature, all reflections on personal faculties, on mind and spirit, have a figurative form of expression and use ideal forms of articulation. Hegel's label "objective idealism" is, on this line, a title for the insight that we always use *ideals* in making *forms* explicit, namely as the 'objects' of 'objective spirit', i. e. of true "Geisteswissenschaften". The label "absolute idealism" is a title for our highest reflections on, and celebrations of, the human condition in general, institutionalised in religion, arts, and philosophy. When we grasp this fact, it gets clear that, and why, we should *not* burn theological and religious texts in an autodafé of all 'metaphysics', as David Hume had proposed. Instead, we have to *explicate* their *real* content *critically*: Only logically enlightened philosophy can overcome dogmatic belief-philosophy in theology, but also in scientism and naturalism.

Hegel's 'transcendental' reflections result, indeed, in a most radical development of Kant's insights into a priori truths as they are *presupposed* in our understanding. Kant's analysis was, at first, limited to *empirical thoughts* and has only the form of a generic self-reflection of *consciousness*, as Hegel explicitly says.[21] Hegel goes beyond this limited scope by developing theoretical knowledge as a *moment* of practical knowledge, which is, as such, a general *form of practice* or *institution* in a most general sense of these words. I find no better expressions that could serve us in our short and general characterizations. Individual knowledge and free action exist only in taking part in – or instantiating of – general forms in a self-conscious, self-reflected and actively controlled way.

'Speculative' reflection makes the form of generically canonized knowledge, conceptualized cognition and means-ends-relation in possible free actions explicit, namely as conditions of possibility of thinking and leading a personal life. The task of philosophy is to articulate and comment upon these presuppositions of subjective spirit. Philosophy thus provides *explications of the major forms* of communal practices that function as relatively a priori conditions for understanding and free action, i. e. for a competent participation of the individual subject in a human life with all other persons.

[21] Enc. § 415.

4. *Mind, Spirit, and the Immortal Soul*

True liberalism must refute naïve individualism. Human rights, for example, are of a kind that *we want* the positive laws and the powers of governments be restricted by them. I. e. *we limit* the right to set positive laws by a legal government (or parliament). To understand the grammar of this generic *We* correctly, however, is as difficult as to understand the true meaning of our religious talk about *God* and *'his' divine will*, or its verbal secularization in metaphorically talks about *natural rights*.[22] Such talks appeal to a 'true understanding' of the 'essential conditions' of rightful law-giving. What we call natural or divine laws are most general principles. They are neither divine nor natural. They are, and must be, already acknowledged 'by us' or claimed to be acceptable 'to us'.

Transcendental philosophy as developed by Kant can already be seen as the enterprise to *translate* traditional talks about the transcendence of heaven and God, the immortal soul and a Last Judgement *into ideas,* i.e. into really acknowledged orientations that govern our taking part in, and developments of, community-based personhood, mediated by ideal concepts. *An idea* is, in this sense, a 'realized notion', not just some subjective 'thought'. *The idea* is, generically, the whole system of accepted conceptual orientations in thinking and acting.

In Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, the explicit starting point (of the introduction) is the *gnothi seauton* of the Delphine Oracle. We have to learn who we are. This is not achieved by subjective introspection. It needs a reflective analysis of us as personal beings with understanding and reason. Understanding (Verstand) is, terminologically, just the ability of following rules and reproducing schematic forms. Reason (Vernunft) is, again according to the philosophical terminology developed by Kant *and* Hegel, good participation in the applicative use and critical development of forms, norms, and rules as they are made explicit by labels (words) or (implicative) sentences (expressed by linguistic forms like "if p then q", but also "P is Q" in some of its abstract readings). Becoming and being a person (not just in the sense of a

[22] In Enc. § 552, Hegel says that the principles of legal liberty can only be abstract. They are, as such always somehow superficial. He adds that the institutions of a state must recognize that 'accurate' religious conscience of the individual subjects is always the actual form of their 'absolute' moral truth. On the difficult notion of accuracy see B. Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2002. Accuracy is a kind of self-control that is as 'objective' as possible – in contrast to mere *sincerity* of immediate intuition. However, the absolute subjectivity of our local perspective in all our performative acts of thinking, intending and doing, including all reflective self-consciousness, self-control and self-determination heavily limits this ideal of objectivity in our self-assessments.

human individual as it is counted in elevators but in the full sense of personal competence and life) means taking part in personal relations to other persons in the framework of institutions that define the *roles* via their successful *fulfilments*.

Now we can see already better in which sense (objective) "Spirit" with capital letters is a reflective title for the development of *all the institutions of personhood*, so to speak, which *incorporates* since Socrates, Jesus and St Paul the *principle of absolute subjectivity* i. e. of conscience and accuracy.

Hegel himself identifies Spirit with what we would call today the *History of Human Culture* – but again, with making a difference between an Oriental culture of collective conduct, Mediterranean culture of heroic virtue and post-Christian culture of subjective conscience. Hegel's word for these three 'epochs' is "world history" ("*Weltgeschichte*"). It does not at all refer to all particular historical events and outer forms of political powers, only to the major moments in the development of the most basic principles of being a free personal subject.

The most crucial logical point here is that all thinking takes place in a *we-mode*. In (silent) talks I say that one or we can say what I say. Herein, Wittgenstein unknowingly agrees with Hegel. The same holds for any action, which is, as such, always already a form of participation in personal practices. In performing an action scheme or 'maxim', we declare *ipso facto*, as Kant already sees, that it is 'good' or 'allowed' to instantiate the generic action. Knowledge always already is what a generic *we*, Kant's transcendental subject, canonizes or could canonizes as *generic truths*, not what *I* as an individual subject hold to be true or cognize. It might be difficult to understand 'who' this *we* (or *concept*) is. It is, however, just as difficult as to differentiate real science from its mere appearance, or true knowledge from mere belief.

The tradition of rationalism and empiricism (from Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, and Hume to Kant) begins with self-certainty and wants to develop a notion of true knowledge of the objective world on the ground of such subjective certainty. Hegel sees that such an epistemology comes much too late. Feelings of certainty are no essential part of any robust notion of knowledge. Certainty is even a misleading *idée fixe* of modern theory of knowledge and moral philosophy in the post-Cartesian epoch – overlooking the deep logical fact that any well-determined content is coarse and general, never fine-grained and particular in the sense of 'singular'.

As a result, philosophy of Spirit is essentially the same as philosophy of the generic person. It transcends as such by far the

limits of any mere philosophy of mind. Mind and intelligence are only subjective features of human subjects. The central categorical imperative for Hegel is, therefore: *be a person and respect the others as persons* (§ 36 Philosophy of Right). Of course, the first part of the formula goes back to Pindar's "be who you are by learning".[23] It says (if we do not restrict it to the legal status of a citizen): Become a full person by education and self-formation. Its second part says that we should treat *all* human beings as a personal co-subjects, which means that we must care for their dignity and allow them at least in principle to cooperate with us freely – as far as they are capable.

In view of Kant's talk about "*homo noumenon*" or "transcendental I", it is just a kind of truism to say, as Hegel famously does in the *Phenomenology,* that the *personal I* is a *We*. The other direction, that any We is an I, expresses the obvious fact that individual subjects who say "we" take their judgments as *representative* for *a We with capital letter.* This expression refers to *generic we-groups*, so to speak, from the most comprehensive of mankind down to concrete cases. The use of expressions like "subject", "individual", "personal identity", "person" is as various as that of the words "I" and "we", on which they logically refer. At least some rough canonization are, therefore, helpful.

We all are *individuals*. Our *bodies* cannot be *cut into two parts* such that more than one part survives. This is the anthropomorphic (or rather: animal-related) material pre-knowledge that lies on the conceptual ground of all uses of the word "individual" – which has, therefore, in all other contexts a 'metaphorical' meaning. This holds for the equivalent Greek word "atomon" as well, especially in physics. As animals, our identity is naturally defined by the life process from birth to death. Other physical 'things' are defined as individuals by particular features, some of them depending on relations to us and our interests. A chair, for example, was no chair before its construction and (possible) use. It stops being a chair when it ends to be useable as a chair.

The word "*subject*" is obviously ambiguous; its purely grammatical use refers to the subject of a sentence. Its usage in reflecting on me (or you) as a personal subject focuses on the fact that we (like higher animals) live a life with a peculiar local perspective on the surrounding world. In other words, as sensitive beings with enactive perception, i.e. with a perception-dependent behaviour, oriented at

[23] Pindar, 2. Pyth. Ode 72, in Pindar, *Die Dichtungen und Fragmente*, ed. and trans. by L. Wolde, Dieterich, Leipzig 1942 (reprints: Leipzig, German Democratic Republic): *genoi hoios essi mathōn.*

our animal appetite or already at symbolically represented goals, we share with animals the subjectivity of our local and temporal performances here and now. (I do not use the words "person" and "subject" in all details exactly like Hegel, but the main contents are the same.)

There are different ways to distinguish between the finite and the infinite. In one reading, empirical things, matters, or events here or there, now or then are finite *particulars* ('Einzelnes'), whereas the *general* ('das Allgemeine') is always infinite or *indefinite* in status. Singular matters are limited in time and space; if they are perceived, then from *finite* perspectives. What a subject actually senses, perceives or does – here and now – is *empirical*. We should restrict the word "empirical" to such indexical cases (no matter how many).

The *general form* of our action and *generic conduct* is, as such, not empirical. It is 'infinite' insofar as generic types transcend local time and local space. They are trans-subjective, situation-invariant. This holds for the life-form of animals as well as for the forms-in-performance that we humans can reproduce. Some of them are such that we can instantiate or re-enact them deliberately and freely, on purpose and with (self) consciousness. Being a person in the sense of a personal subject consists in actualizing such forms (properly').[24]

On the other hand, singular empirical matters and subjects are in another sense infinite: They are indefinite, inscrutable and ineffable insofar as we can never *fully describe* them. Under *this* point of view, general concepts are finite – and written texts and their general content also.

In understanding the context- and situation-dependent 'object' of speech in using the deictic or anaphoric pronoun "*I*", we have, therefore, to distinguish between the *empirical moment* in which *I* refer to *me* as the present subject – as the object of reflection. The relevant presence (*Gegenwart*) that limits the extension of 'immediate' self-reference lasts as long as we have to wait for the end of the ongoing process. We may think, for example, of the time in which I truly say "I am sick" or of the time it takes when I am returning home. In such cases, the 'subject-object' of my talk about myself extends as long as the relevant process lasts.

In other cases, I might talk about my whole past or about me from my birth to my death. In the latter case, I already use the grammatical mode of *futurum exactum*, because part of what I refer to lies in the future. From today's perspective, many future events

[24] 'The concept', 'the idea', 'the spirit', 'the infinite', 'being' and 'God' are, as we see now, *different moments* in our reflection on the world in general and on our performative participation in a personal world in particular.

are mere possibilities. Even though the 'extension' or reference of the word "*I*" seems in such cases to coincide with me as a whole individual, it can refer also to mere parts or moments of my life, for example, to me as a person, instantiating a character, or type of personality. My bodily identity plays nevertheless always a crucial role for determining the extension of me as the subject-object to which *I* refer to when *I* say, for example, that *I* am about to do X, that *I* am in the state Y or the *I* have the property Z. Peter Strawson made this point.[25] It would be nevertheless wrong to 'infer' that the subject resp. semantic object, *about which I* talk in such cases, always falls together with *my body*. You can, for example, insult or hurt me by insulting or hurting my daughter or my status, the memory of me, and so on. Usually we say that I do something when a part of my body does it. Not my hand is stealing when my hand takes something away, but I do it as a personal subject; but when a ball hits my hand involuntarily in a soccer game, it is not my action and does not count as a foul.

Referring to me in the future does not always mean to refer to my future body but future possibilities of being and acting, as Martin Heidegger had shown, rehearsing an insight of Plato and Hegel, such that caring for 'my soul' in Socrates's sense is caring for 'all of my future'.

Aristotle distinguishes in his book *De anima*, a book of highest significance for Hegel, between

1. the 'vegetative' soul of all living beings,

2. the 'sensitive' or perceptive soul as the *subjectivity* of animals, and

3. the concept-understanding soul, the *psychē noetikē* or spirit of human beings as personal subjects.

Moreover, Aristotle declares against Plato that there is no 'fourth', no 'immortal' soul, detached or separated from the body. Like scientific enlightenment or so-called naturalism of our modern times, Aristotle denies that we continue to exist after death in any way. Caring for my soul thus reduces to caring for personal virtue and my competence in further life: All self-relations reduce to knowledge, belief, attitude, conduct or action concerning my past or present being and some possibilities in my future life. More precisely, birth and death seem to limit the scope of the words "my", "me" and "I" – for example in my present fears or expectations. However, Plato's Socrates talks also about

4. a 'fourth' soul, detached from my finite life.

[25] P. Strawson, *Individuals*, Routledge, London 1964.

Whereas my body and *I* as a personal subject exist only empirically from birth to death, *I* also can refer by using the word "*I*" to me as a person in the domain of all dead, living and future *persons* in a much more abstract way. When Socrates declares in the dialogue *Phaedo* shortly before his death that his acceptance of the death penalty manifests a case of *caring for his soul*, it should be clear that he does not care for any virtue in the sense of a faculty or ability. The case of becoming a *person* by education and self-training is different from Socrates' forming his 'immortal soul'. Socrates declares, moreover, that he is willing to recognize the laws of the city *only* in principle, while disagreeing with the particular correctness of the death-sentence, the arguments of the prosecutors, and the vote of the court in particular. By doing so, Socrates does not commit a kind of suicide, as Nietzsche has suggested; nor does he make himself into a kind of self-righteous martyr. Socrates does also not seem to be mainly interested in the glory of becoming famous. He actually is turned into a hero of philosophy via the narratives of his 'students', starting with Xenophon and Plato, or Aristippus and Antisthenes, the founders of epicureanism and cynicism – just like Jesus was declared Christ or Messiah by his followers.

According to Socrates, true philosophy must teach us the right form to live *and die.* This is so because a full person does not fear death and sometimes might prefer high dangers to a secure life – as we can see at the attempts to oppose a tyrant like Hitler. Socrates himself lives and dies, so to speak, for his 'new' idea of free conscience, the Socratic *daimonion*. This daimonion, which usually only 'says' that something should *not* be done, did not hinder him to stay in prison until his death, as he declares explicitly. In other words, his conscience 'told' him indirectly to accept the death penalty. This is the – deeply dialectical – Socratic answer to the problem that political, legal and moral judgements even of a huge majority of people can be wrong, though they might formally be 'right' in the sense that they follow well-established traditions and in principle accepted rules or norms.[26] Free personal judgement and 'conscientious objection' can stand in radical tension to such traditional opinions, for example to a superficial majority rule, the practice of oracles and other methods of decisions by mere chance as parts of a conventional ethical life in Ancient Greece. The same can hold for all kinds of religious taboos, for example in Judaism,

[26] Hegel says in Enc. § 552 that it is only an abstract, empty idea that an individual could act directly "according to the sense or letter of legislation", not mediated by her conscience, the spirit of her 'religion'. Religion in this sense is articulation of one's whole personhood – if only in mythological narratives.

and for many 'literal' readings of canonized Holy Scriptures, for example in Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant Christianity resp. in all varieties of Islam.

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates refutes the idea of the soul as a *merely* harmonious and instrumentally rational form of living one's life. His arguments in favour of an afterlife beyond death are admittedly partly sophistic and might sound wrong in detail. Nevertheless, his main idea is as clear as it is astounding: We need a mythological allegory of an immortal soul (as some traditional religions provide it) if we really want to understand what it means to care for one's soul in the sense of the *whole* person. It means, in secular interpretation, to live and act according to a kind of *script* that outlines my major roles and tasks in a life that is good in the sense of Plato's *idea tou agathou* of the 7th book of the *Republic* – which is just that same as the idea of being a good person.[27]

The logical form of caring for the 'infinite' person more than for the finite, empirical, subject in her present or future life is this: The personal subject transforms the person, the 'character', by instantiating generic actions of certain types – which, in turn, can change habits and attitudes, but also personal status. These actions make narratives about the person true (or false). We all know the difference between a true history and a mere novel invented 'around' the real persons – by the subject herself or by other persons. In other words, the whole person or the immortal soul is, as it were, the *truth-maker* for narratives about the person even after the death of the subject. As such, the person 'exists' in all eternity in the same way as any past fact in world history: The past is settled independently of our knowledge about it.

We obviously need such a logical disambiguation of the notion of the *I* (or me and mine) as subject, as object of reflection, and as person (which sometimes might by the same as my whole 'character'). It is true that I will not exist as a subject after my death, but others could at least in principle talk about me as a person and some results of my deed will last. Some aspects of our lives might be explicitly *remembered* after death. Socrates says, accordingly: After my death, *I* shall stop to be identical with my body or corpse. *I* will be somewhere else only in a metaphorical sense, since I shall be at no place in the world any-

[27] There are situations in which to accept death is better for the whole person than to decide for further living, for example, when a fight for liberty or the free judgement of personal conscience is more important than survival in a 'happy private life'. Hegel names Cato of Utica and Christian martyrs as examples. The common task of religion and art is to show or display the significance and of philosophy to explicate the real meaning of this in some way or other.

more. In reality, I will change my status from subject to person in a way as my future changes into a settled and unchangeable past. The past shares with generic truths the interesting logical status of 'eternity'.

Hegel adds to this insight that a personal subject is able to think here and now about the person she has been, she is now, the person she wants and hopes to become, and the person she might or will have been in the far future – in virtually infinite levels of reflection. The full person thus refers to herself as a whole in her present situation and achieves by this a certain independence of the judgements of others without discarding them altogether, especially if we judge the competence of these other persons as higher than our own. This form of independence surpasses by far the heroism of ancient virtue or *aretē* and leaves the usual fight for public recognition behind. Robert Brandom's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology* comes very near to this insight.[28] The only difference lies in the peculiar form of virtually infinite, but actually always only finite and limited self-reflection that integrates in the good case the relevant traditional norms of the true, the good, and the beautiful or perfect, the peer groups of excellence and, especially, a hopefully accurate thinking about possible futures.[29] – As we see now, the third soul, the *psychē noetikē*, is not yet the whole person.

It was mainly a *pedagogical* point for Plato to claim that the poets lie, especially when they attribute to the gods' bad habits and crimes. In mythological stories, there is no mimesis, no literal correspondence to facts and laws of the real world. Just because they are edifying novels about heroes and gods as ideal types, we should not depreciate the divine or seed distrust in the ideals of the perfect. – Plato himself invents theological narratives in support of a democratically controlled republican constitution based on division of labour and competition for excellence in the state, in science, education, and arts. However, Plato seems to distrust people – such that he decrees in his Laws (Nomoi) that the citizen *must* 'believe' in the immortal soul and a Last Judgement as he had sketched it in the 10th book of the Politeia. Nonbelievers are even put into education camps for brainwashing. State-religion is, for Plato, mythological articula-

[28] R. B. Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust. A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 2019.

[29] Any merely possible infinite regress is always actually stopped somewhere by some explicit decision to act according to a possible scheme or type of action – or an implicit decision not to act. This is the remaining truth of methodological individualism. It means, again, that the individual subject is absolute in her doings.

tion of the aristocracy of the soul and common celebration of the ēthos of the state. Millions, nay billions, of Christian and Muslim followers share a 'literal' reading of Plato's myth about a purgatory of the soul after death even though Plato himself makes it clear that it is a fiction.

Hegel agrees with Friedrich Schiller that the so-called Last Judgement for the soul as the Ultimate Court for the value of the person is, in fact, no transcendent God, but just the future of world history: *Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*. This does not mean that Hegel or Schiller wanted to replace religious myths by the historical sciences. Rather, they both plead for a virtually infinite self-reflection at presence in the most general mode of judging about my judgements and action as if I could look back on me from the end of my life. We know this logical mode grammatically as 'futurum exactum', talking now about what will have been the case if we see to it. There is a narrow relation to Leibniz, as Hegel frequent references to the *monadology* shows: I myself am in a sense a monadic mirror of all possible judgement about myself. In self-evaluation, I can, do, and must refer to virtually all possible and real judgements about the quality of my own personal life. The standard criteria for evaluating them are not at all private. All this does by no means reduce to immediate feelings of a 'good conscience' or mere sincerity; and it goes far beyond striving for maximizing sensations of happiness and minimizing sensations of pain in life. Hegel sees, moreover, that a person that does not use this form in thinking about her past, present, and future life already starts to re-animalize herself. This can happen on any level of behaviour and attitude – by deciding to live a life that only cares for present feelings of satisfaction or only for some private prospects of future pleasure in a merely instrumental way of *homo rationalis oeconomicus*. The problem gets clear if we just remember the truism that we all will be dead fairly soon. Nevertheless, the slogan "after us the deluge" is wrong not only with respect to others. It is wrong also as an attitude to ourselves as persons. This is so because as a full person I have to judge about me as a full person. This gets totally clear in cases when we explicitly accuse *other* people of missing the task of being a person. If they feel offended, as we may expect that they do, they show *ipso facto* that they know what is at stake: A person who makes herself more important than she is, a person that strives for absolute certainty or a person that is not able to give things out of her hands deserves our pity. The same holds for a person who is afraid of the basic facts of human freedom.

When Wittgenstein says in the *Tractatus* that the world of the happy is different from the world of the unhappy, it comes near to Hegel's transformation of Kant's idea of non-contradiction in merely subjective morality into a coherent thinking of a full person. At the same time, Hegel opposes Plato's idea to force people into a belief in a detached soul and a judging God as well as his conventional and, indeed, collectivist, idea of virtue or *aretē*.

We know, however, that even in most accurate self-evaluations we can err, that we must take risks and trust the benevolence of other people – as Brandom also has seen. Virtually no technician, artist or scientist, for example, can be certain if others will accept his proposals and develop them further. The same holds for religious teachers, political leaders, entrepreneurs, reflecting philosophers, or any other person taking part in a development of our institutions that go beyond a mere application of already established schemes. This means that we have to swallow the fact that all 'real' knowledge and judgment to the best of my consciousness and conscience remains finite, fallible.[30] Our grasp of the infinite always consists in capture the relevant forms.

5. *The Absolute Right of Subjective Knowledge and Conscience*

For Hegel, the Christian idea of free but accurate conscience deepens the ethics of Plato by radicalizing it in a somehow Socratic way, as I would like to say.[31] Socratic reflection on the idea of free conscience shows that a full personal subject has always to check the quality of her life from an internal perspective. This has to be done in the limits of self-knowing, in recognition of the fact that evaluations by others do not lie in our hands.

The connection of this insight with the Leibnizian idea of monads lies in the fact that a monad is conceived as a kind of subjective and perspectival mirror for the whole world – insofar as it is, so to speak, my world. A personal subject is such a monad. The wider its scope of attention and reflection and the truer its judgement about real possibilities, as it were, the fuller is its personhood.

[30] The notions of conscience and (self-) consciousness are two translations of Latin *con-scientia* and Greek *syneidesis* (sometimes wrongly written as *synderesis*). They become central in the dialectics between the locality and finiteness of the subjective and personal life of individuals and the transcendence of personhood and personality.

[31] Even though the proposal of the early Christians to separate the state and the celebration of absolute spirit in their religious community was an immensely progressive step, it "is not enough that in religion it is commanded: Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's, for it is precisely a question of determining what is Caesar's, i. e. what belongs to the worldly regime" (Enc. § 552).

In precisely this sense, a personal subject lives her finite life in present reality and nevertheless exists as a person in the indefinite domain of possible (and real) persons as generic types. Such forms might by represented by thinking or memory, i.e. by symbolic acts. As such, they are not accessible to merely *sensitive* beings. As a result, the form of my life heavily depends on something I have called its script, as I use it for orientation.

In a sense, Socrates was indeed the first to explicate *the absolute right* of the personal *subject* to use the *power of reflective judgment* in free decision and action in his talk about a *daimonion*. His life and death shows the dialectics between 'democratic' *collectivism* and the dangers of self-righteous ('philosophical') *subjectivism* in personal judgement of conscience. Erasmus of Rotterdam seems to have realized the importance of this when he coined the expression "Sanctus Socrates". According to this oracle, we can see the life and death, the teaching and acting of Jesus as a development of Socratic insights – with the same dialectical stance to the traditional religious and moral law of his people. According to Hegel, however, the epoch of Plato still did not know yet about the absoluteness of subjectivity.[32] Plato only saw the close connection between the republic and the pedagogical development of personals roles and statuses in his *Politeia*; in the Nomoi, he did not accept that subjects have an absolute right to judge and act according to their hopefully accurate conscience.[33]

The German word "*Gesinnung*" refers to a general cast of mind, a type or quality of thinking, such that Hegel can demand from the ethical person to turn her actual conscience into a stable mindset or *Gesinnung*, i. e. into a personal character. There are always tensions between subjective conscience, personal virtue expressed in the ideal narratives of religion, ethical conventionalism and tra-

[32] In Enc. § 552, Hegel writes that Plato was unable to account in his constitution of a state for the infinite, i.e. absolute and indefinitely reflective, form of subjectivity. "He did not know it yet at all, such that there is no subjective freedom in his model of a state. Nevertheless he tried to instantiate all the moments of an ideal concept of a state, as if there were true principles of eternal justice. He also thought that philosophy in the sense of a political science was in a position to recognize them" (my trans.). "However, any actual thought contains just as much naïve subjectivity as conceptual generality or truth". In short: Plato overlooked the true form of concrete thinking and its most important moment, subjective consciousness.

[33] See again Enc. 552: "Feeling, perception, imagination belong to that form [of immediate subjective thinking]. We develop our understanding of absolute forms and norms in a good common life necessarily in this form first. Religious explication by mythological narratives come later, though we grasp them still more immediately than philosophy. Greek philosophy therefore explicates in a sense Greek religion, which existed much earlier. It has reached its perfection by comprehending general principles of human spirit or personality. Religion is the first form in which they are explicitly reflected" (my trans.).

ditionalism.[34] Insofar as civil liturgy in patriotic celebrations of the constitution[35] are too near to the actual state administration,[36] they are of only limited help. In the following sense, Hegel agrees with Kant: "There cannot be two kinds of conscience that differ in content, a religious one and a moral one". (Enc. § 552). This entails that crimes based on 'religious' contentions are just normal crimes and true religion only articulates the ethical normativity of being a person.

Kant's principle(s) for subjective but conscientious moral judgement stand(s) under the title of a *categorical imperative*: "Act in way such that you can will or accept that the maxim or generic action of your act is turned into a general norm or rule (for all persons)". The interesting point about this formulation is that it indeed excludes free riders and defrauders who cannot make their maxim public and therefore must lie about what they allow themselves and others to do. However, Hegel attacks Kant's Practical Philosophy because of its subjectivism: An act is not yet morally good if it passes the above test. This is so because I should also check what the others *really accept* as norms of *allowed conduct and action*. Nobody is permitted to steal things, for example, just on the ground that he might consistently be against the property regime of his society by pledging for some form of communism. Kant's moral 'duties' are, under this view, much too few. It is not sufficient to derive them from the formal coherence of allowing everyone to follow my maxims.[37]

[34] See again Enc. § 552: "Ethical life is the state in its substantial inner being, its development and realisation. Religion makes it explicit. [...]. According to this relationship, the state is based on the moral disposition of the people and the latter on their religious disposition" [...] "But true morals can be the consequence of religion only if the latter is an outer form of a true content. This means that its idea of God must be a true one" (My relatively free translations always focus on content, not words).

[35] See again Enc. § 552: "It was a folly of recent times to change a system of corrupt morality [in France], its constitution of state and legislation without changing religion. It was wrong to make a political revolution without a religious reformation and to think that a constitution of a state could stay in peace and harmony despite its opposition to the accepted old religion and its sanctities. No external guarantees (e.g. the so-called chambers and the power given them to determine things like the financial budget) could help against a lack of conscience of those people who were to administer the laws".

[36] See again Enc. § 552: "The laws appear [...] as man-made. Even if they are instituted according to accepted norms of constitution, they are threatened to collapse under an attack of a religious spirit that is against them. Independently of their true quality they fail if the real, subjective, conscience of the people does not sanction them".

[37] If Max Weber criticism of an ethics of conscience would be merely opposed to Kantian subjectivity, he would have been right. Plato was also right to say that a republican state cannot survive without a society of republican persons. Vice versa, republican persons exist in sufficient numbers only in a republican state. Max Weber and Karl Popper are, however in danger to identify conscience with self-righteous sincerity, thus becoming too critical against the right of the subject to appeal to her conscience – with the dialectical

6. *Being a Free Personal Subject*

In immediate reflection, freedom seems to be the same as free will, governing free action in the sense of "arbitrium brutum". Mere intuition identifies it with *arbitrary* choice between different options. This "Willkür" of choice by mere chance is indeed a basic moment of human action, but still a deficient version of freedom of the will.

A free personal subject leads a life that is *her* life. This means that she acts by manifesting roles of a kind of 'script' for a life that she herself has recognized at least in part *as hers*. This does not preclude that she serves others; no one is free in all respects.

There are – even proverbial – four main pillars of freedom: Freedom of speech, of religion; from fear, from want. Freedom of religion is always already free subjective conscience and free self-organization in free communities and their 'liturgies'. However, it can happen that in the name of freedom from fear and want we give up some freedom of speech or participation. State organizations that serve welfare and security like administration, police, and military, can and do limit our liberty to do what we want. Peace keeping forces, legislation, taxation and jurisdiction got more and more important after the 'neo-lithic' revolution of agriculture – which demanded rules for a division of labour and goods, for property and commerce. A particular problem was the fear of nomadic attacks against settlers and peasants all over the world. The tension between the strife for freedom from want i. e. for welfare and prosperity, and for freedom from fear, i. e for security, on one side, political participation on the other, lies at the ground of Hegel's structural analysis of world-history. Hegel characterizes the oriental riches – from Mesopotamia to Egypt or India and China – by a collective acceptance of the primacy of a politics of security and welfare – without much participation. In such 'societies', there is only one free person, the Great King or Patriarch, representing the whole nation, city, state, or empire. All other persons are legally 'children', expected to behave according to certain 'objective' norms of conduct.[38] Accepting the rule of an 'oriental monarchy', from Egypt and Mesopotamia via India to China clearly delimits freedom of speech and religion, not only some freedoms of participating in political decisions.

consequence that their 'liberal' ethics move much nearer to 'Platonic collectivism' than Hegel ever would defend it after he has uncovered its merely conventional *aretē*.

[38] The word "liberty" expresses (implicitly, as it were) the primacy of political participation. It names at least a state of being free from captivity, serfdom, slavery, and arbitrary government by others. Full liberty, however, means taking part in societal and political development, by active proposals of change or active recognition or criticism of decisions.

A full person is a free person. Being a free person means standing on equal footing as any other free person, at least in principle. It does not mean total equality of resources or power, property and or political might; but it certainly excludes an 'Indian' system of castes or a feudal system of aristocratic classes by birth.[39]

In aristocratic cities, only some individuals are free persons. This holds at first for the leading families, the patrician fathers or higher nobility, later also for the demos or plebs in Athens or Rome – which we have to understand today as a kind of lower nobility,[40] as a recent dissertation of Martin Palauneck in Leipzig also has shown.[41] Athenian "democracy" was a reign of male fathers of noble families (even of low rank) over much more people, not only females, servants, and slaves, but also immigrants and other co-citizens without political rights. The 'majority rules' of such a 'democratic' government relied heavily on chance. The urge to ask trivial oracles like the flight of birds limited the free judgements of military and political leaders, who nevertheless remained responsible for 'their' decisions *post hoc*. The much more intelligent priests in Delphi obviously supported the 'new' idea of free conscientious judgement when they declared that Socrates was the wisest man in Greece. As Plato's *Apology of Socrates* shows, this did not save him: His teaching of a *daimonion* was an attack against the conventional *religio* of Athens – as Hegel correctly observes.

The kingdoms in Western Europe preserved some of the republican sub-structures of the Roman times: Their kings were not Oriental Patriarchs, but feudal military leaders like the Caesars. This means that the political constitution of their 'empires' was a mixed bag, with quite some rights of the nobility, some self-rule in towns and cities and a peculiar political and moral role of the Roman Church as an organization for educating Christian personal subjects and their ethical conscience.

By down-levelling the hierarchy of clerics and laypersons, Protestantism freed the flock from the shepherd – but calls until today the leader of the parish still "pastor". Culminating in

[39] In some sense, the chances of social advancement, especially in the army, might have been greater in the Roman Empire than in mediaeval feudalism (or today).

[40] It is an interesting fact that nomadic tribes like the ancient Jews between the cities of the great empires also practiced liberty already in the sense of a relatively free tribe-organization. Priests and prophets supported patriarchs of the families and kept the 'nation' together – by a joint religious narrative. The development of the idea of the free person goes indeed back to nomadic forms of living in tribe-structures like those of the early Greeks, Celts, Germans, Slavs, Turks, Mongols, and so on.

[41] M. Palauneck, *Gescheiterte Freiheit. Hegels Kritik der aristotelischen Tugend in seiner Darstellung der griechischen pólis*, Inauguraldissertation, Leipzig 2018.

the abolition of the serfdom of the peasantry (king's decree in Prussia in the year 1807 in which England also abolished slavery), Hegel sees in these developments a progress of a state of free subjects and a society of free persons. He and his times might have, however, underestimated the question of formal state constitution, though. After the experience of the French Revolution and Bonaparte's empire, a constitutional monarchy looked preferable to a 'democratic' republic – which necessarily changed in Marx' project to give political power to dependent workers, the so-called proletariat.

7. *Romantic Art and Universal Content of Religious Truths*

The modern notion of art is a notion of Romanticism, so to speak. It finds its most influential articulation in Kant's analysis of taste or *subjective judgement* about natural beauty on one side, the poietic pieces of art on the other. Kant claims that there are no norms or rules established that could lead our aesthetic judgement in a way rational understanding is governed by criteria of differentiation and generic principles of inference. According to this Kantian notion of beauty and art, aesthetic judgements are actualizations of a *free play* with some hope of agreement between persons with good taste. Novalis calls all poetry an art to excite the mind[42] and all art a *play with subjective attitudes and states of the mind*, in German: "Gemütszustandsspiel".

Hegel realizes that no art of this sort can satisfy, as he says, our 'highest needs'. Therefore, modern art is, like modern civic religion and civil politics, at least as much in need of philosophical reflection as religious scriptures, cults and traditional art.

Traditional art was always part of traditional religion. Traditional religion consists, in turn, not just of holy books as in the case of the Jewish bible, but also of temples and theatres, plastics and paintings, churches and choirs, their liturgy and music. Modern art is also part of modern civic religion. Even the most trivial versions of pop-art or fictional literature stand in some tradition of religious art – and 'teach' the audience some positive attitude to the community in negative criticisms of all sort of privation in politics and society. They canonize a binding world-view, just as traditional religion had done.

[42] Novalis, *Schriften*, vol. 2, ed. by H.-J. Mühl, Hanser, München 1978, p. 801: "Poésie = Gemütserregungskunst".

Can there be a 'true' religion in such a situation, as Hegel obviously claims? Is there a true world-view, contrasting wrong ideologies or superstitious belief? Is there a true ethics, or do we have to accept a plurality of religious beliefs and moralities, just like there are many different ideas about sex life and family morals? What is the truth of religion if there is any such truth?

Hegel gives a short answer: "The generic content of religion is absolute spirit".[43] Absolute spirit, in turn, is the performative form of leading a personal life together with other persons, commented upon and celebrated in religion and art. Philosophy and modern literature reflect on the very meaning of these commentaries. This stands, indeed, in the tradition of Plato and Kant who see that there is need to know what we do or really mean when we talk about God and the soul. Before evaluating the truth of religious sentences or propositions or corresponding acts of faith, we better distinguish superficial or 'literal' readings from essential inferential content, which has in any case another form than statements about past, present or future empirical facts.

A first step in Hegel's analysis therefore refers to the logical form, status, and inferential content of speculative, i.e. very general and high-level sentences containing words like "God" or "soul", followed by a second step of context-relative disambiguation. Sometimes, the word "God" stands for the whole world of all being-in-performance, sometimes it stands for a counterfactual super-person knowing all truths about all objects at all times and places in the world. Altogether, however, "God" stands for spirit or sapience – and this spirit or sapience stands, in turn, for the generic We of us as partaking in a joint practice of being persons. In other words, talking about God can refer to the I as a We or to a We that stands in opposition to a merely subjective I. In the same way, we must reconstruct the very meaning of our talks about the soul or the person as the type that a personal subject manifests in her life. As such, it is time-general or 'infinite', the '*immortal psyche*' of Socrates and Plato.

The most important feature of all art and religion, science and philosophy lies, however, in the fact that it 'succeeds' only if it is becoming popular, namely in folk-art, folk-religion, folk-science and common sense. However, by becoming popular, all art and science is somehow 'trivialized', gets superficial, and changes its nimbus, just as 'serious' music can turn into pop-music. (The result of this observation is that elitist Nietzscheanism in the educational bour-

[43] "Der *an sich* seiende Inhalt der Religion (ist) der absolute Geist" (Enc. § 552).

geoisie of late Romanticism is inherently self-contradictory.) Hegel sees, in fact, that any word, sentence, or concept has three main uses. We must distinguish,

1. a general use with 'infinite' content in generic reflections on whole species, types or forms of beings or processes,

2. their 'finite' empirical or indexical application resp. manifestation in perspectival appearances and singular instances, and, finally,

3. the relevant particularization by which we treat these singular cases as objective, i.e. accessible from some other perspectives.

The idea of God now turns into a counterfactual imagination of 'all possible perspectives' on all 'possible cognitions' and their objects, i.e. of the ideal concept of all truth and real reality, including silent thinking and intention of the mind or soul or in the head or heart, as the metaphors say.

Of course, all this contains the insight that understanding presupposes abstraction from merely subjective perspectives and intuitions. This involves the eternal task of finding out how the same things are expressed by different words and how different subjects can or might access them from different perspectives. As a result, the usual fight about words belongs to a kind of underdeveloped, still youthful, understanding – and to an overestimation of merely superficial appearances. This gets most dramatic in religious matters. Religion should bind us to personal universality or universal personhood.

Unfortunately, religions can have the opposite result when we focus too much on differences of articulation and rites. It is therefore necessary to be tolerant with all the different confessions and religious sects, practices, teachings, and liturgies – and focus on their general equivalence and function, even though not all religions and world-views before and after the era of scientific enlightenment are in all respects equally 'good'. I.e., some of them may contain 'wrong' orientations in their scripts for an allegedly good personal life. This holds for nationalist (misunderstanding of) religions as well as for all versions of naturalism. The first deny the universality of personhood, for example by denying the universal identification of their local gods with moments of the one God or with the unity of a divine spirit as an ideal entity of reflecting on the whole (human) world we live in. The second reduces personhood to the subjectivity of animal life in some way or other. Humans appear as animals that are only a little bit more intelligent than higher animals, allegedly on the ground of their relatively larger brain. The interesting incoherence of such naturalism consists in a presumptuous cosmic view from nowhere that results in some desperate self-devaluing.

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Art Is (Not) Knowledge. A question of Hegelian terminology

di Luca Illetterati*

Abstract
In a seminal paper published in 1974 and titled 'On Artistic Knowledge. A Study in Hegel's Philosophy of Art', Albert Hofstadter focuses on the cognitive value of art within Hegel's philosophy. In particular, Hofstadter aims at explaining in what sense we should understand the Hegelian idea that art is a deeper form of knowledge than the sciences. In my paper I intend to show how the question becomes clearer if we take into account the specific terminology that Hegel uses and in particular the fundamental distinction between the German terms 'kennen' and 'wissen'. In the English language, these terms tend to deflate into one indistinct notion, namely that of 'knowledge', which blurs this conceptual distinction.

Keywords
Hegel, Art, Science, Knowledge, Truth

1. *Introduction*

The aim of the current paper is to account for the title that I have given it – Art is (not) knowledge.

This is a title that is explicitly and voluntarily ambiguous. In the following pages, I will try to give reasoning for the negation in parentheses, that is, within the context of Hegel's thought, why one can and at the same time cannot say that art is knowledge. The 'not' in parentheses means that with respect to Hegel, we can both say that art is knowledge while at the same time saying art is not knowledge. And saying this does not imply a trivial contradiction. That we can say that art is knowledge and that it is not knowledge can only be explained by asking ourselves what is meant by knowledge, that is, by trying to clarify the meaning from which art must be denied the status of knowledge and its meaning with respect to which we must instead say, according to Hegel, that art is knowledge. Therefore, I will try to explain in what sense for Hegel art is knowledge and in what sense art is not knowledge.

* Università degli studi di Padova (IT), luca.illetterati@unipd.it

The fact that for Hegel art is knowledge is clearly derived from art's systematic location. Art, in the systematic Hegelian articulation, constitutes one of the three expressions of the absolute spirit: art, religion and philosophy. For Hegel, the absolute spirit is 'knowledge of the absolute idea' (*Das Wissen der absoluten Idee*).[1]

This conviction has been rooted in Hegel since Jena's time. In his Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit of 1805/06, Hegel writes the following:

> Thus, at the immediate [level], spirit is art: the infinite knowledge (*Wissen*), which, immediately alive, is its own fulfillment – the knowledge (*Wissen*) which has taken back into itself all the exigency of nature, of outer necessity, and [has bridged] the division between self-knowledge and its truth.[2]

One of the most significant secondary literature works on the relationship between art and knowledge in Hegel is that of Albert Hofstadter, titled 'On Artistic Knowledge. A Study in Hegel's Philosophy of Art'.[3] The text was published in a collective volume edited by Frederick Weiss in 1974, titled *Beyond Epistemology. New Studies in the Philosophy of Hegel.*

Hofstadter's text opens with the explicit question about the possibility of considering art as knowledge: '*Is art knowledge?'* The answer, according to Hofstadter, can only be an affirmative answer:

> On Hegel's view, it must be; for he maintains that art is called upon to disclose truth in the form of the sensible artistic construction, and the disclosure of truth is certainly a cognitive process.[4]

For Hegel, in fact, "in art, as in thought, we are seeking truth". Art differs from other ways of truth "only in virtue of the manner of its appearance".[5] The way truth appears in art is that of the sensitive medium. Art is a disclosure of truth through a sensible medium. This reference to truth, which is a distinctive feature of the Hegelian conception of art, necessarily implies, according to

[1] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), together with the Zusätze, trans. by W. Wallace and A.V. Miller, revised with introduction and commentary by M. Inwood, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, §533.

[2] L. Rauch (ed.), *Hegel and the Human Spirit. A translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit* (1805-6), with commentary, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1983, p. 173.

[3] A. Hofstadter, 'On Artistic Knowledge. A Study in Hegel's Philosophy of Art', in F.G. Weiss (ed. by) *Beyond Epistemology*, Springer, Dordrecht 1974, pp. 58-97.

[4] Hofstadter, 'On Artistic Knowledge', cit., p. 58.

[5] G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art. The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, together with an introduction by A. Gethmann-Siefert, edited and translated by Robert F. Brown, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 183.

Hofstadter, that art is a cognitive process. Hofstadter insists on this character and goes so far as to say that art is, according to Hegel, a cognitive process that lies at a higher level than the cognitive processes that are realized in the natural sciences.

However, according to Hofstadter, this clearly involves a serious problem. How can it be argued that:

> art stands closer to ultimate truth than does empirical natural science, like physics, chemistry, and biology, as well as empirical psychological or social science, like individual psychology or economics or history?[6]

Hence, Hofstadter's even more explicit question:

> Is the knowledge we receive in a Bach fugue – assuming there to be knowledge here at all – superior as knowledge to the knowledge that Newton gave us in his equations or that more recent physics provides about the external world? Is music closer to the truth of reality than physics? Can anyone in his right mind believe such an absurd declaration?[7]

To say that art is a form of knowledge closer to the truth than the sciences is not, Hofstadter asks, simply a bombast?

2. *Knowledge between 'Kenntnis' and 'Wissen'*

Hofstadter's entire text is aims at clarifying this point, at explaining that this idea, if properly understood, is not simply bombast, hence clarifying and explaining what it means for Hegel to say that art is something that has to do with truth in a more intimate way than what is found in the sciences, that is, what kind of experience of truth is proper to art and in what sense this experience of truth is a more radical experience than what can be done within what we call scientific disciplines, that is, in the special sciences.

Now, what I would like to show is that this different experience of truth that, on the one hand, characterizes the particular (non-philosophical) sciences and, on the other hand, art (and with it also religion and philosophy) finds its clear explication in Hegel in two clearly distinct cognitive acts that should not be confused with or superimposed on one another. These two cognitive acts are also expressed within Hegel's thought with different nouns – *Kenntnis* and *Wissen* – and different verbs – 'kennen' and 'wissen'. Therefore, I would like to try to show how different it is for Hegel

[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*

to talk about *Kenntnis* and about *Wissen*. These two expressions, however, deflagrate in the English language within a single word – *knowledge* – which risks mixing within itself semantics that in Hegel's language are clearly distinct.

A considerable part of Hofstadter's difficulties in making sense of the Hegelian idea that particular non-philosophical sciences and art are different experiences of truth is connected to the impossibility of the English language to distinguish between 'kennen' and 'wissen'.

This is of some relevance because if the two cognitive acts are clearly different, it also weakens the discourse that tries to show how one is more a true knowledge compared with the other. There is no doubt that for Hegel, art, religion and philosophy are more radical and profound experiences of truth than the experiences of truth embodied in the sciences. However, it is also true that for Hegel, the experience of the truth of the particular sciences, on the one hand, and that of art, religion and philosophy, on the other hand, are not trivially two different degrees of the same knowledge but are two structurally different forms of knowledge or two different spiritual activities.

Within the section *Der absolute Geist*, we never find the verb *'kennen'* and its correlates (*'Kenntnis', 'Erkenntnis', 'erkennen'*), making explicit the type of cognitive activity that is at stake in it, but we always and only the verb *'wissen'* and the noun verb *'das Wissen'*.

3. *Knowledge and Science*

What is the difference between these two activities that both refer to the verbs 'kennen' and 'wissen'? In the 1801 essay with which Hegel first entered the philosophical debate of the time, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy*, he proposes a distinction that can introduce us to the question. At the very beginning of the text, Hegel distinguishes between *knowledge* in the sense of 'Kenntnis' and *science* (*Wissenschaft*), that is, between cognitive activity that belongs properly to the field of knowledge, which is understood as 'kennen', and cognitive activity, which is instead characterized as knowledge in the sense of 'wissen'.

Kenntnis, Hegel says here, "is concerned with alien objects (*Kenntnisse betreffen fremde Objekte*)".[8] That is, knowledge in the sense of *Kenntnis* is such because it is directed towards an object

[8] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. by H.S. Harris and Walter Cerf, SUNY Press, Albany 1977, p. 85.

that presents itself as other and separate from the knowing subject. In this type of knowledge, there is, on the one hand, a subject who knows and, on the other hand, an object that is known. Therefore, knowledge is a movement that a subject makes in the direction of an object that is always something else and separated from it and that as the other and separated is necessarily always something given.

On the other hand, in its difference from *knowledge* (Kenntnis), *science* (Wissenschaft) cannot, according to Hegel, take anything as a presupposition and as a given. At the moment in which it assumes something as a datum or as anything of a presupposition, it is no longer *science*. This is like saying that *science*, to be such, cannot be founded in something else by itself – in an external object – but only in itself. In this sense, *science* does not have so much to do with the knowledge of an external object, but rather, so to speak, with itself. The knowledge that is proper to *science* is a knowledge that does not turn into something else or separate and, therefore, is already given, turning to itself. Therefore, in the Hegelian perspective, *science* is the process by which reason recognizes itself in the other from itself in such a way that recognizing itself and thus having itself "as an object", it finds in itself, in reason itself, and not in something external from itself, says Hegel, "its whole work and activity".[9]

Now, it is clear that Hegel is discussing the difference between the mode of being science of philosophy and the mode of being science of the so-called particular sciences. On the one hand, the particular sciences are knowledge of objects separated from the knowing subject, and these objects determine the scope of investigation of each science; on the other hand, philosophy is knowledge that does not have any particular object that identifies it as a specific investigation because what reason knows in it is reason itself, it is itself, its own activity. Philosophy – which is not *Kenntnis* but *Wissenschaft* – is knowledge that knows itself, that knows and recognizes itself in the other by itself. If the sciences have an object that in some way establishes the disciplinary sphere within which they operate, philosophy then has no proper object: there is no object that identifies the sphere of investigation of philosophy. On the contrary, from a certain point of view, it can be said that philosophy is the dissolution of the very object structure of what it knows.

Therefore, it is clear that knowledge understood as *Kenntnis* and knowledge understood as *Wissen* are not simply two cogni-

[9] Hegel, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, cit., p. 87.

tive activities that are placed within a graduated line with respect to which knowledge of science is less knowledge of philosophy. Rather, they are two forms of knowledge that respond to different logics, to two different experiences of truth, neither of which can totally absorb the other and for which Hegel uses different verbal expressions: 'kennen' for particular scientific knowledges and 'wissen' for philosophy.

Taking a deeper look, the verb 'wissen' is not used by Hegel for philosophy alone. Philosophy is certainly the highest and most complete form of that knowledge of the absolute idea that Hegel calls 'wissen', but this 'wissen' – which in English is rendered with the construct 'absolute knowledge' – is not a domain that Hegel reserves only to philosophy. According to Hegel, the absolute spirit is in fact articulated in art, religion and philosophy; therefore, also art, as a form of the absolute spirit, is a kind of 'wissen'. It is a *Wissen*, not a *Kenntnis*. Art, like philosophy, has no object in itself. That is, anything can be an object of art. As Hegel writes in his *Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*: "Everything can be elevated into art".[10] And everything can be elevated to art precisely because what defines the work of art is not its objectity, its addressing to an object or another, but it is the fact that in that object, the spirit recognizes itself.

4. *Accuracy and Truth*

To assert that art has no specific object and that, therefore, any object can be elevated to art does not mean that it has no *aboutness*. Somehow, it is possible to say that the two traits that Arthur Danto considers essential for a work of art (*aboutness* and *embodiment*) – the idea that works of art are embodied meanings – are the translation of the Hegelian idea that art is a knowledge of truth through a sensitive medium.[11] Hegel is far from arguing for any decorative or ornamental conception of art, just as he is far from any instrumentalist reduction of it. This does not mean that we should deny its ornamental value in relation to pleasure or its educational function in relation to the moral sense. However, it means that it is not in these determinations, in the feeling of pleasure or in its ability to refine customs, that art finds its *raison d'être*. What is decisive, for Hegel, and what distinguishes the embodied meaning of art from other forms of embodied meaning (e.g., that of adver-

[10] Rauch (ed.), *Hegel and the Human Spirit*, cit., p. 174.
[11] Cfr. A.C. Danto, *What Art Is*, Yale University Press, New Haven (Conn.) 2013.

tising communication) is that it is always an experience of the absolute, that is, an experience through which the spirit knows itself in the other from itself, an experience in which the spirit recognizes itself, in which the spirit grasps itself as a self-awareness activity.

In a way, one can also say that, for Hegel, what lies behind any aboutness of art is the truth:

> Art accordingly has for its object the portrayal of the truth of the existent being that, insofar as it is commensurate with the concept, must be in such a way that it is in-and-for-itself. Therefore truth has to be other than mere accuracy, for instead what is external must harmonize with something inner that in itself is something true.[12]

When speaking of truth for Hegel, one must be very careful, and it is not by chance that in the quoted text Hegel, distinguishes between truth (*Wahrheit*) and accuracy (*Richtigkeit*). *Richtigkeit* – accuracy or correctness – is the agreement between a subjective representation and an object. *Wahrheit* – the truth – is instead the agreement of something with its essence, with its concept. Interpreters tend to distinguish between at least two meanings of 'truth' in Hegel. The first is the propositional meaning (and *Richtigkeit* is associated with it), indicating the correspondence between a statement and a state of affairs. The second is what some have called the material meaning or even ontological meaning of truth, which precisely indicates the correspondence of the thing with its essence, that is, the thing as it realizes itself. Robert Stern clarifies the issue in a famous article in 1993:

> Truth is *propositional* when it is attributed to statements, judgements or propositions on the basis of their accordance with the way things are. Truth is *material* when it is attributed to something on the basis of the accordance of the thing with its essence.[13]

For Hegel, art is an experience of truth, not in so far as it gives rise to any correspondence between the work and state of things represented in it (this is the sphere of what Hegel calls *Richtigkeit*), but in so far as it reveals the agreement of a content with itself, the agreement of the object with itself, that is, with its concept, which is the very realization of the idea, which here is understood as the unity of the inside and outside, of the subject and object, of the concept and of reality.[14]

[12] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art. The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, cit., p. 248.

[13] R. Stern, *Did Hegel Hold and Identity Theory of Truth?*, in "Mind", 102/408 (October 1993), pp. 645-647, here, p. 645.

[14] On the concept of truth in Hegel and for a critical analysis of the most recent debate, cfr. G. Miolli, *Il pensiero della cosa:* Wahrheit *hegeliana e* Identity Theory of Truth,

At this point, we have some fundamental elements that allow us to understand in what sense we can say that art is not knowledge and in what sense we can say that it is. If by knowledge we mean the activity that Hegel indicates with the notion of *Kenntnis*, art is extraneous to it. Art does not know any object; it is not a cognitive activity of a subject directed at the apprehension of an object that is external to it. When it tries to be this activity, it can only be structurally fragile, insignificant, and inferior to any scientific knowledge. However, art is knowledge, but not in the sense of *Kenntnis* but rather in the sense of *Wissen*, that is, as knowledge, that is, self-knowledge, that is, recognition of itself in the other by itself, the aptitude of the spirit to find itself in what presents itself as something else with respect to it.

5. *Connoisseurship*

The concept of knowledge as understood as *Kenntnis* and, therefore, as the knowledge proper to the particular scientific disciplines actually appears in the Hegelian philosophy of art. It appears in relation to that figure that Hegel calls the connoisseur (*der Kenner*). Among the non-trivial ways of considering the work of art, Hegel mentions the person of taste, the man educated in the sense of beauty and the connoisseur. The attitude of the connoisseur is, for Hegel, the attitude, one might say, typical of his time, the attitude typical of the modernity to which Hegel refers: "The *connoisseur* replaced the person of taste".[15]

If, in fact, a man of taste is one who is able to perceive beauty and distinguish between beauty and what is not in relation to external appearance – "So taste is a way that the senses apprehend what is beautiful, a way of relating oneself to it sensibly"[16] – the connoisseur instead is the one who does not rest on the external elements and who assumes the work of art as the *object* of his knowledge, approaching it by considering it in its historical side, in its material aspects, with reference to the technique with which it is composed, to the external conditions that determined its emergence. This moment – that of the connoisseur – constitutes the necessary overcoming of the type of relationship embodied by the person of taste precisely because

Verifiche, Trento 2016.

[15] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art. The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, cit., p. 196.

[16] *Ibid.*

it relates to the work of art by assuming it as a complex object, not only as a superficial immediacy. The taste theme is, as is well known, decisive for all eighteenth-century culture and crosses both English empiricism and the French Enlightenment, along with German empiricism; yet Hegel seems to consider it a theme that in many ways belongs to the past.[17]

The attitude that Hegel seems to identify as that of typical of his own time – as we have said, the attitude that, in many ways, is more emblematic of modernity – is, instead, that of the connoisseur, who, unlike a man of taste, does not stop at the surface and tries to grasp the constituent aspects of the work of art that lie beyond its surface:

> However, connoisseurship does at any rate involve specific information about all aspects of the work of art, including reflection about a work of art, whereas taste just carries out a wholly external reflection. So the work of art necessarily has aspects that occupy the connoisseur; it has a historical aspect, a material aspect, and a lot of conditions involved in its production. The work of art is linked to a stage of technical development, and the artist's individuality is also an aspect it exhibits. Connoisseurship makes these specific aspects its objects: the technique, the historical occasion, and many external circumstances. All of these are essential for the fundamental knowledge of a work of art, and for its enjoyment. So connoisseurship accomplishes a lot. Of course it is not the greater thing, but it is a necessary element.[18]

That of the connoisseur is not the supreme approach because his consideration of the work of art cannot grasp the *truth* of the work. This is precisely because the connoisseur considers the work as an object to be *known*:

> Connoisseurship, then, can stick to mere externalities too, can stock to the technical aspect, to the historical aspect with no notion of anything of a more profound nature. It can even hold its historical aspect to be above than profundity.[19]

The connoisseur, the *Kenner*, has a relationship with the work of art, which is that of knowledge in the sense of *Kenntnis*. In this sense, her work is a cognitive activity aimed at investigating the specific object that is the work of art. Therefore, the knowledge of the connoisseur is not a knowledge in the sense of *Wissen* precisely because in it, the knowing subject and known object remain separated from each other.

For Hegel, the supreme moment in the consideration of the

[17] *Ibid*. About the notion of "taste", cfr. B. Babich, *Reading David Hume's 'Of the Standard of Taste'*, de Gruyter, Berlin-Boston 2019.

[18] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art. The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, cit., p. 197.

[19] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art. The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, cit., pp. 196-197.

work of art – a moment beyond the characteristics of the man of taste as much as that of the connoisseur – is that which is able to grasp art as an experience of truth, that is, as an experience in which the spirit recognizes itself in the other by itself:

> If we wish to set forth an ultimate purpose of the work of art, it is this: to uncover and represent truth, what stirs in the human breast, and of course to do so in a pictorial, concrete way.[20]

What should be stressed is that art does not have a purpose outside itself for which it would be the means. Truth is not something that lies beyond the work of art and to which the work of art can or must lead. There is no purpose at which art is aimed. Art has its purpose in and of itself, inasmuch as it is the revelation of truth. In this lies its absoluteness:

> Therefore the roundabout way of positing, as ultimate purpose, something other to it as essential apart from the work of art is superfluous. Of course there are things that are mere means and have their purpose outside themselves, and the work of art can also in a certain se be one of them, for instance, as bringing money and honour and fame, although these purposes have nothing to do with the work of art as such.[21]

This attitude that considers art as the disclosure of truth implies a radical transcendence of the cognitive dimension proper. This is a transcendence that in no way implies an annulment of knowledge or of the contribution of the connoisseur, who is indeed fundamental for the work's observer to be able to bring himself to the knowing that the work embodies. However, the consideration of the work of art as an experience of truth is not knowledge in the sense of *Kenntnis*; it is cognitive activity that turns to an object external to the knowing subject. In this knowledge that is a *Wissen*, the spirit grasps nothing but itself in something other than itself, here in a sensitive medium, in an existent materiality. What the spirit knows is not so much the objectivity of the work but the fact that that the work is precisely spirit. The connoisseur's knowledge is fundamental to be able to comprehend the work in its truth. However, at the same time, the comprehension of the truth of the work implies a transcendence of the purely cognitive dimension, the experience of the truth that the work embodies can be grasped only by going beyond the fundamental cognitive elements that allow us to grasp the work

[20] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art. The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, cit., p. 208.

[21] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art. The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, cit., p. 209.

in a more refined way.

6. *Still Life*

I would like to give an example of the need for the connoisseurship and, at the same time, for its transcendence.

To that aim, I would like to consider the painting that Luc Tuymans, one of the most significant and influential contemporary painters working today, presented for *Documenta 11* in Kassel in 2002, a gigantic painting titled *Still Life.*

Figure 1. Luc TUYMANS, *Still Life*, 2002, Oil on canvas, 347 x 500 cm
Courtesy David Zwirner, New York and Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp.
Pinault Collection

The event, which was curated that year by Okwui Enwezor, ended on 15 September, a few days after the first anniversary of the 11 September 2001 attacks: as a result, the German exhibition was marked by strong political and social connotations. Many of the works raise an issue. Tuymans is an artist who has worked within the area of history, on the tragedies of history. One of the fundamentals of Tuymans' painting is the Shoà, the unrepresentable horror of reality, which can only be represented by showing its ordinary, normal side.

Tuymans' work for Documenta raised a lot of expectations: he is expected to tackle the theme head-on. The painter, on the other hand, presents a gigantic still life, the largest still life that has ever been produced, it is said.

The work takes the viewer by the wayside. It displaces the horizon of the viewer's expectation. The work seems to have no relation with reality. Yet that is exactly what the work is about. And this emerges not so much from the subject matter but from the way in which it is represented and how it is treated.

There is a sense of suspension, like a sort of floating in a void. Perhaps, it is what remains after the tragedy, perhaps it is the insistence of the ordinary after the extraordinary. Maybe it's what remains and what to start from again. Maybe it is a trace of life (*Still* Life) suspended in nothing, in a void that has erased everything.

Tuymans seems to put the viewer in a different perspective, in the right perspective, Wittgenstein would have said.

Marc Donnadieu, one of the leading experts on Tuymans' work, describes this work as follows: "The painting is like an inverted vanity: it doesn't signal that life is ephemeral and fragile, but on the contrary that it resists and is resilient".[22]

The information we receive about the work, the knowledge we acquire about it, opens the way for us to participate in its revelation of the truth. It is even said that without that knowledge, without the knowledge of the circumstances, the work would remain at least partially closed to us. Yet at the same time, the recognition that the work is capable of initiating cannot be reduced to the knowledge we have about it. Through the information provided by the connoisseur, we approach the work, and we recognize ourselves. In that still life, we are not invited to know the fruit, the jug of water, the dishes. In it, we see something that concerns us, that is totally contained in the work without being represented.

7. *(Anti)Reductionism*

In *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy*, from which we started to trace the difference between knowledge as *Kenntnis* and knowledge as *Wissen*, Hegel does not just distinguish between *Kenntnis* and *Wissenschaft*. What he denounces there as a typical feature of modernity is the reduction of *Wissenschaft* to *Kenntnis*:

[22] Cf. C. Bourgeois and M. Donnadieu (eds.), *Luc Tuyman, La Pelle* (Venice, Palazzo Grassi, 24 March 2019 – 6 January 2020), Guide to the works, p. 18.

[The individual] refuses the living participation demanded by science (*Wissenschaft*), transforming it into mere information (*Kenntnis*) keeping it at a distance and in purely objective shape. Deaf to all demands that he should raise himself to universality, he maintains himself imperturbably in his self-willed particularity.[23]

In this way, philosophy is reduced to mere knowledge (*Kenntnis*). In philosophy, reduced to mere knowledge, "the inward totality does not bestir itself, and neutrality retains its perfect freedom [from commitment]".[24]

This reduction – the reduction of the knowledge in the sense of 'wissen' to knowledge in the sense of 'kennen' – is at the origin of the inability to grasp the type of knowledge (*Wissen*) that is proper to art, religion and philosophy and the transformation of art, religion and philosophy into experiences of truth that belong to the knowledge that Hegel calls *Kenntnis*. When art, religion and philosophy are thought of within the form of knowledge in the sense of *Kenntnis*, they can only reveal themselves as weak, fragile and pathetic forms of knowledge, thus paradoxically opening the way to an idea of art as decoration, to an idea of religion as a private feeling and to an idea of philosophy as opinion.

8. *Conclusions*

I would like to conclude with some words by David Foster Wallace taken from an interview that is mentioned in the text that closes the collection of occasional essays by Zadie Smith entitled *Changing My Mind.* The essay is called 'Brief Interviews With Hideous Men: The Difficult Gifts of David Foster Wallace'.[25] In this interview, David Foster Wallace is talking about literature and says:

I guess a big part of serious fiction's purpose is to give the reader, who like all of us is sort of marooned in her own skull, to give her imaginative access to other selves. Since an ineluctable part of being a human self is suffering, part of what we humans come to art for is an experience of suffering, necessarily a vicarious experience, more like a sort of 'generalization' of suffering. Does this make sense? We all suffer alone in the real world; true empathy's impossible. But if a piece of fiction can allow us imaginatively to identify with a character's pain, we might then also more easily conceive of others identifying with our own. This is nourishing, redemptive; we become less alone inside.[26]

[23] Hegel, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, cit., p. 85.

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] Cf. Z. Smith, 'Brief Interviews With Hideous Men: The Difficult Gifts of David Foster Wallace', in Ead., *Changing My Mind: Occasional Essays*, Penguin, London 2012, pp. 257-300.

[26] The entire interview with David Foster Wallace published in "The Review of Con-

When Hegel says that art is a knowledge of the absolute idea (*Wissen der absoluten Idee*), he does not say something very different. To say that art is an absolute knowledge (*ein absolutes wissen*) means that it is not the knowledge of an object (even if this object is another subject) but that it is one of the fundamental experiences in which the spirit knows itself by recognizing itself in the other by itself. This is an experience that is not a simple knowledge understood as *Kenntnis* but a knowledge understood as *Wissen*, as self-knowledge, that is self-recognition in the other by itself.

In this sense, we can return to the title of this work – Art is (not) knowledge – and dissolve its ambiguity: if one thinks of knowledge as *Kenntnis*, for Hegel, art is not knowledge. If one thinks instead of knowledge as *Wissen*, then one must say that art is knowledge.

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From Poetry to Music. The Paradigms of Art in German Aesthetics of the 19th Century

di Francesco Campana*

Abstract

This paper analyzes a decisive moment in the German aesthetics of the nineteenth century, that is, the passage from a view that considered poetry (i.e. literature) the most perfect art within the system of the individual arts to one in which music is the art *par excellence*. On the one hand, we find the philosophical perspectives of the first half of the nineteenth century (Hegel, Solger, Schelling). On the other hand are the views that, beginning with Schopenhauer, dominate the second half of the century with Nietzsche and Wagner. The aim of this paper is to show the meaning of this historical-philosophical moment in order to produce an interpretation that concerns both the theoretical consideration of art and the general philosophical approach of these authors. I intend to read this transition as one of the initial moments of the upheavals that affected art in the twentieth century, which some recent interpreters have read, in Hegelian terms, as the "end of art".

Keywords

Poetry, Music, Classical German Philosophy, System of Arts, End of Art

The present contribution aims to examine a decisive – even if not sufficiently considered – moment in the German aesthetics of the nineteenth century.[1] I will examine the passage from a view on art that has literature as its point of reference to one that sees music as the major art. My purpose is to consider this turning point in the conception of the individual arts, trying to understand both its intrinsic meaning and its consequences for subsequent conceptions of art. Indeed, I will place the discussion of some of the most representative authors of the period in a broader perspective, thus connecting them with contemporary debates. In particular, I will interpret this shift as the first of the fractures that led to the upheavals of twentieth century art. After framing this moment as the

* Università degli studi di Padova (IT), francesco.campana@unipd.it

[1] This contribution summarizes part of the results of research carried out as a DAAD fellow at the *Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung* in Berlin and as an annual fellow at the *Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici* in Naples. I thank both centers for their support, hospitality, and crucial discussion moments. In addition, I thank Anna Katsman for language editing.

premise of a possible version of the so-called "end of art" (1) and after underlining the philosophical value of the discourse on genres within German aesthetics around 1800 (2), I will examine some decisive authors of the time (3) and analyze the specific features of this episode in the history of aesthetics, trying to explain it and grasp its deepest theoretical meanings (4).

1. *The Beginning of the End*

In order to explain the great changes in art history during the twentieth century, the last decades have witnessed a revival of the well-known Hegelian thesis on the so-called "end of art".[2] Far from meaning an actual interruption of artistic production, this formula has taken on many meanings, departing, sometimes in a significant way, from the version closest to Hegel's words. In this regard, we find in Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* the fact that, in the modern world, art has become "a thing of the past",[3] that is, it has lost the leading cultural, political, and spiritual role it had in the ancient world, for example, in classical Greece. Contemporary interpretations have caught different aspects of this thesis, have emphasized some features over others, and have consistently developed it in different directions, from ones that identify a secularization of art to others that point out its transformation into something philosophical.[4] Despite these differences, contemporary revivals of the thesis share the definition of a caesura, clear and apparently irreversible, between the art of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, on the one hand, and that which preceded them, on the other; all the variants that have occurred have indicated an unbridgeable gap between the way art was conceived, produced and enjoyed in the past and the contemporary emergence of different, often unusual, and in any case radically new artistic phenomena.[5]

[2] Among the most significant contributions, think for example of the reflections of A.C. Danto, H. Belting, A. García Düttmann or R.B. Pippin.

[3] G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I*, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 13, ed. by E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1970, p. 25; Eng. trans. by T.M. Knox, *Hegel's Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1975, p. 11.

[4] For comprehensive studies on revivals and reworkings of the thesis on the end of art see, among others: E. Geulen, *Das Ende der Kunst. Lesarten eines Gerüchts nach Hegel*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 2002; F. Vercellone, *Dopo la morte dell'arte*, il Mulino, Bologna 2013; K. Vieweg, F. Iannelli, F. Vercellone (eds.), *Das Ende der Kunst als Anfang freier Kunst*, Fink, München 2015.

[5] This is the point of view of most scholars. It is worth noting recent countertrends, such as the position of Salvatore Settis, who prefers to underline the aspects of continuity

One of the ruptures of contemporary art, especially after the artistic attempts of synesthesia and intermediality put into play by the historical avant-garde and neo-avant-garde movements, is that it has generated territories that had never before been imagined, new ways of comprehending and categorizing specific forms of production within the artworld. In other words, contemporary art has exploded the traditional modern system of the arts and reconfigured it through artistic genres and forms that are difficult to codify within traditional frames. Not only photography and cinema, but in more recent times conceptual art, installations, performance art, street art and land art are just some of the clearest examples of how the advent of the age of the "end of art" has also meant the end of the traditional system of the arts and the constitution of an unprecedented plurality of artistic forms.[6] The transformations experienced by the art of the last century as well as the current one have led to the breakdown, blurring, and hybridization of the boundaries between artistic genres. Additionally, new possibilities have emerged that often require novel interpretive frameworks to be understood. In a sense, through the exploration of new forms and modes of expression, art has sought out and proposed new ways of conceiving itself and the world, and through these processes, new kinds of rationality have emerged that do not correspond to those previously conveyed through art. This has led (and is leading) to a modification not only of the individual arts themselves, but of the very concept of art in general. This is because contemporary art has consolidated itself precisely through the traditional modern system of the arts. The upheaval of this system has decisive consequences for what we mean by art in the era "after the end of art".[7]

I here propose to identify a decisive premise of contemporary art's situation in the shift that takes place in the art conceptions of nineteenth-century German aesthetics from a system of the arts

between contemporary art (especially figurative art) and the past in S. Settis, *Incursioni. Arte contemporanea e tradizione*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2020.

[6] Recent and comprehensive analyses, carried out from a philosophical point of view, of some of these new artistic genres produced by contemporary art can be found, for instance, in J. Rebentisch, *Theorien der Gegenwartkunst zur Einführung*, Junius, Hamburg 2013 and E. Caldarola, *Filosofia dell'arte contemporanea: installazioni, siti, oggetti*, Quodlibet, Macerata 2020.

[7] I obviously borrow the expression of an epoch "after the end of art" from Arthur Danto, who identifies the epochal fracture in the artworld starting from the second half of the twentieth century and identifies, from then on, an epoch, which he calls "post-historical", in which the teleological structures of the previous epochs (for example, the tension towards mimesis that characterized the history of art until the end of the nineteenth century) are lacking and which is dominated by an unprecedented freedom and a radical pluralism in the forms of artistic expression (A.C. Danto, *After the End of Art. Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1997, pp. 125-126).

in which literature has the main position to one in which music is central. The hypothesis in the background is that the modalities, dynamics, and in part even some deep meanings of this modification belong, on a larger scale, to twentieth-century upheavals as well. Before considering the specific authors of the time, however, it is useful to make a last preliminary point on the concept of the system of arts as a philosophical problem, especially with regard to German aesthetics around 1800.

2. *The System of Arts as a Philosophical Problem*

Passages on the system of the arts, usually coming after the more deeply theoretical and conceptual parts of the aesthetic treaties of the time, can be erroneously perceived as additional and unnecessary sections; they may seem a place where theories are perhaps tested, but which we could do without. Actually, reflections on the system of the individual arts – mostly composed of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and literature, in some cases with the exclusion of some of these or the addition of other arts such as dance or gardening – are essential to the discourse on art and, in modernity, constitute one of its founding moments.

Thinking of art as a system of individual arts is a significant operation from a philosophical point of view. First of all, grouping the single expressions under an overall term such as "art" means highlighting the common features of different forms which, in previous centuries, were perhaps not considered the result of the same intent or were not perceived as the result of practices that are even remotely comparable (think of the historically troubled relationship between poetry and the other forms of art).[8] Second, organizing the individual arts into a single articulated system means in most cases giving them a hierarchical order, arranging them according to a specific criterion, and identifying the artistic forms that serve as models for the others and which are needed to describe the meaning of the general category "art".[9] To move at a systematic level with respect to the different forms of expression that will then fall within the group of the arts, therefore, does not mean stating something trivial or neutral, but making a profound argument about the

[8] Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas. An Essay in Aesthetics*, Polish Scientific Publishers, The Hague *et al.* 1980, pp. 73-120.

[9] On the role of the hierarchical organization of the arts in the evolutionary process of the arts system see N. Luhmann, *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 2017, pp. 292-294; Eng. trans. by E.M. Knodt, *Art as a Social System*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2000, pp. 179-180.

nature, ontology, and meaning of what we understand when we use the word "art". The organization of individual arts into a system is a true device of knowledge aimed at specific arts and, at the same time, at the concept of art in general, which expresses a rationality of its own and tells us a lot about the aesthetic view of those who produce it, but also about their view of the world in general.[10]

It was in the German context at the turn of the 1800s that the system of the arts established itself as an essential part of theoretical treatises on art and consolidated its specifically philosophical dimension.[11] The theoretical codification of art as a system is slightly earlier and goes back to the eighteenth century, especially in the French context. The work that is usually taken as a reference for its foundational character regarding this aspect is *Les Beaux-Arts réduits à un même principe* (1746) by Charles Batteux.[12] Here, for the first time in modernity, the individual arts are structurally catalogued according to an empirical-inductive perspective that follows a specific organizational criterion. Together they produce what can be called a system, understood as the sum and articulation of different artistic expressions that make up a whole.[13] However, with German aesthetics between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this system takes on a speculative dimension that did not belong to it previously, and which becomes central in posing the very question of a system of the arts.

[10] Although decisive, the system of individual arts has been seldom addressed from a theoretical or philosophical perspective. Fundamental were the two articles on the subject by Paul Oskar Kristeller, who, however, analyzed the topic from antiquity to the seventeenth century (P.O. Kristeller, *The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics Part I*, in "Journal of the History of Ideas", 12, 4 (1951), pp. 496-527; P.O. Kristeller, *The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics (II)*, in "Journal of the History of Ideas", 13, 1 (1952), pp. 17-46), and equally notable is the volume by Thomas Munro, *The Arts and Their Interrelations* (The Liberal Arts Press, New York 1951), which, on the basis of a vast historical and philosophical framework, proposes a complex and rich classification of contemporary art. More recently, it is worth mentioning the volume of Giuseppe Di Liberti, *Il sistema delle arti. Storia e ipotesi* (Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2009), which articulates the organization of the arts through four models (catalog, classification, comparison and, indeed, system). With regard to the era under consideration here, one volume that addresses these issues, with particular attention to the concept of "symbol" in the constitution of arts systems, is M. Titzmann, *Strukturwandel der philosophischen Ästhetik 1800-1880. Der Symbolbegriff als Paradigma*, Fink, München 1978.

[11] Cf. Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas. An Essay in Aesthetics*, cit., p. 65.

[12] With respect to Batteaux's work, Kristeller speaks of a "decisive step towards a system of the fine arts" (Kristeller, *The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics (II)*, cit., p. 20).

[13] Kristeller writes, "only the eighteenth century produced a type of literature in which the various arts were compared with each other and discussed on the basis of common principles, whereas up to that period treatises on poetics and rhetoric, on painting and architecture, and on music had represented quite distinct branches of writing and were primarily concerned with technical precepts rather than with general ideas" (Kristeller, *The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics Part I*, cit., p. 497). Cf. Munro, *The Arts and Their Interrelations*, cit., pp. 14-20.

The configuration of the arts into a system, making possible a unitary and organic concept of art, has also made possible the overall philosophical reasoning on art as a discipline. The fact that art is constituted as a system emerges concomitantly with the affirmation of a philosophy of art as a determined and recognized branch of scientific knowledge. Starting from the eighteenth century, therefore, the system of arts makes possible the philosophy of art as a coherent and unitary theoretical reasoning on art.[14]

With the German philosophers around 1800, the system of individual arts becomes, probably for the first time, a real philosophical problem, taking on a full speculative dimension. Prior to this, the unitary coherence of the single arts in a system was given by a criterion deduced in a mostly empirical and descriptive way, which gave a picture of the field of art and showed possibilities of application at a mainly technical-practical level. In classical German philosophy, the system becomes both the precipitate of reasoning expressed in the previous parts of the philosophical essays on art and exhibits a further, properly theoretical development. To summarize, with the German authors at the turn of the century, the system of the arts acquires more and more centrality and the possibility of a real philosophy of the arts emerges, in the terms of a philosophy of the system of the arts, where the unifying criterion that innervates the system is given more by the fundamental theoretical approach than by an inductive description of the material in the field. In this sense, the final parts of the art treatises of the period become increasingly necessary for understanding the underlying theoretical concepts, and do not constitute merely secondary appendices at all.

Analyzing the theories of literary genres of the time, Peter Szondi speaks of a radical "leap [*Sprung*]"[15]– which takes place just between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth in the German context – from a model of induc-

[14] Peter Kivy effectively emphasizes this epochal passage and it is useful here to read his words: "Without the modern system there could not be *the* philosophy of art – only philosophizing about things that were later to be seen as of a piece. Before they were seen as of a piece, however, there was nothing for *the* philosophy of art to be about, that is to say, *the* philosophy of all *the* arts. I am not, of course, saying that the arts of music, painting, literature and the rest did not exist before the eighteenth century. What did not exist was the belief that they formed a separate class: that they belonged with each other. And it was that belief that made the discipline of aesthetics possible: that gave it its subject matter, *the* arts, all of them, and the task of saying why they were *they*" (P. Kivy, *Philosophies of Arts. An Essay in Differences*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York-Melbourne 1997, pp. 3-4). Cf. Di Liberti, *Il sistema delle arti. Storia e ipotesi*, cit., p. 34 and p. 140.

[15] P. Szondi, *Von der normativen zur spekulativen Gattungspoetik*, in P. Szondi, *Poetik und Geschichtsphilosophie II*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1974, pp. 7-183, p. 97.

tive-normative kind of classicist and Aristotelian derivation, whose intent was to make order in reality and create compartments, the "*Klassifizierungen*", which were useful in artistic practice, to a deductive-speculative model, in which the division, the "*Einteilung*", into literary genres was drawn from the conceptual determinations of literature and art.[16] This conceptual shift, which takes hold at the moment when reflection on art consolidates once and for all as a philosophical discipline, indicates a general perspective, aims to describe aesthetic thoughts in question as a whole and, going far beyond the poetics of literary genres, can also be extended – as I have tried to indicate here – to the articulation of artistic genres.[17]

For this reason, it seems meaningful to investigate this juncture in the history of aesthetics in order to identify its significance and then read it, in a retrospective way, as a premise to the more general upheaval and caesura of the "end of art" identified, in this case, as the explosion of the traditional system of individual arts in the twentieth century.

3. *From Poetry to Music*

In his reflection on the relationship between art as a general notion and the individual arts, and within his considerations on the shattering of the arts system in the contemporary era, Theodor W. Adorno briefly dwells on the nineteenth-century attempts to order the multiplicity of individual arts into an organic concept of art that unfolds into a system. Adorno's suggestion can be taken as a first approach to the trajectory that I intend to outline here:

> The great philosophers, Hegel and Schopenhauer among them, have labored, each in his own way, at the question of heterogeneous multiplicity and have attempted to provide a theoretical synthesis. Schopenhauer did so in a hierarchical system, crowned by music; Hegel's attempt took the form of a historical, dialectical system that was supposed to culminate in poetry.[18]

[16] Cf. Szondi, *Von der normativen zur spekulativen Gattungspoetik*, cit., p. 10. Cf. also P. Lacoue-Labarthe, J.-L. Nancy, *L'Absolu littéraire. Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1978, p. 11 (Eng. trans. by P. Barnard and C. Lester, *The Literary Absolute. The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, SUNY, Albany (NY) 1988, p. 3).

[17] As noted, among others, by Gérard Genette, it is always difficult to clearly separate the empirical-inductive plan from the speculative-deductive one, when talking about literature and art in general (G. Genette, *Introduction à l'architexte*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1979, pp. 70-71). What I want to emphasize here, however, is a tendency that identifies a shift of focus from one side to the other.

[18] Th.W. Adorno, 'Die Kunst und die Künste', in Th.W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 10.1, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 1967, pp. 432-453, p. 436; Eng. trans. by R. Livingstone, 'Art and the arts', in R. Tiedemann (ed.), *Can One Live After*

From Adorno's point of view, Hegel and Schopenhauer are the two most representative thinkers regarding the systems of the arts in the nineteenth century. In particular, they are the models of reference for which individual art is chosen to stand at the head of the hierarchy of the arts, a choice that marked the passage of an era. Two tendencies are indicated: the former finds in poetry the art *par excellence* and the latter, which stands as an alternative, places music in this role.

In effect, in the Hegelian proposal most of the reasoning that had been carried out in the decades preceding him (as often happens with Hegel) and that was characterized in the terms of a system of the arts with "literary traction" is concentrated and articulated in a complete and evident way; Schopenhauer's view, on the other hand, does not come at the end of the development of a trend that precedes him, but constitutes the shift from one paradigm to another. In order to elaborate Adorno's discourse – and in this way to fully understand and give the right value to these two positions in the general perspective of the theoretical production on art in the nineteenth century – it may be useful to take a closer look at both and also at some of the other most relevant positions of the century in the German context.

3.1 *The Literary Paradigm*

With respect to the first tendency, poetry – which is how literature was most commonly referred to at the time, from epic to drama – stands as the apex in the three systematic philosophies of art of the first part of the century, those that Michelet extolled as the most representative aesthetic thoughts of the first thirty years of the nineteenth century: Hegel's perspective and the earlier proposals of Schelling and Solger.[19] Although these three aesthetic views are different from each other and are the product of specific perspectives (which for reasons of space I cannot analyze here in detail), on this point they seem to speak the same language and for this reason it is interesting to recall some passages from them.

As far as Schelling is concerned, it is in his lectures on the *Philosophie der Kunst* (1802-1803) that we find a complete picture of the division of art into individual forms. In those pages poetry is treated at the end of the set of individual arts and is described

Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2003, pp. 368-387, pp. 371-372.

[19] Cf. C.L. Michelet, *Entwickelungsgeschichte der neuesten Deutschen Philosophie mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den gegenwärtigen Kampf Schellings mit der Hegelschen Schule*, Verlag von Duncker und Humblot, Berlin 1843, pp. 219-220.

as "the manifestation of the *essential nature* [*An-sich*] of all art".[20] Characteristic of poetry is the limitlessness of possibilities and the universality of content that it, compared to other arts, can fully manifest. This aspect is due to the use of the word and language, which allows a margin of maneuver in the representation of reality that the more material arts cannot provide. Schelling clearly expresses the hierarchical superiority of poetry with respect to the other arts, when he compares it with the figurative arts that, in his system of individual arts, precede poetry:

> All art is the direct reflection of the absolute act of production or of the absolute self-affirmation. Figurative art, however, does not allow this act to appear as something ideal, but rather only through an other, and thus as something real. Poetry in contrast, by being essentially of the same nature as figurative art, allows that absolute act of knowledge to appear directly as cognitive act. Poetry is the higher potence of formative art to the extent that in the artistic image itself it yet maintains the nature and character of the ideal, of the essence, of the universal.[21]

It is thanks to this ability not to be limited by matter and to have a cognitive potential articulated in verbal language that poetry is able to act as a driving force for all the other arts and to correspond to that general meaning of art that Schelling, a few years earlier in 1800, had placed at the top of the *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* as the keystone, capable of uniting the subjective and objective dimensions, of his general philosophical system.[22]

A similar role is reserved for poetry in Solger's work, in which art is the main way through which essence comes into existence. In both his most famous works, namely *Erwin* (1815) and the posthumous *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik* (1829), when Solger speaks of "art", he most often means "poetry". In the third dialogue of *Erwin*, the character Adalbert – the author's alter ego – describes the role poetry assumes of presenting itself as a synthesis with respect to the multiplicity of the other individual arts:

> If, therefore, poetry is a particular art, it is, however, the only one that is at the same time the whole of art, and therefore we can in no way consider it as any other particular thing nor as a particular concept, but only as the very idea of beauty that

[20] F.W.J. Schelling, *Nachlass 6. Philosophie der Kunst und weitere Schriften (1796-1805). Teilband 1*, ed. by C. Binkelmann and D. Unger with the collaboration of A. Wieshuber, in F.W.J. Schelling, *Historsch-Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. by T. Buchheim, J. Hennigfeld, W.G. Jacobs, J. Jantzen and S. Peetz, Frommann Holzboog, Stuttgart 2018, p. 322; Eng. trans. by. D.W. Stott, *The Philosophy of Art*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1989, p. 202.

[21] *Ibid.*, modified trans.

[22] On art as the "keystone" of the Schellingian system see, among others, D. Jähnig, 'Die Schlüsselstellung der Kunst bei Schelling', in M. Frank and G. Kurz (eds.), *Materialien zu Schellings philosophischen Anfängen*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1975, pp. 329-340 and T. Griffero, *L'estetica di Schelling*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1996, especially pp. 65-67.

is self-revealing, that is, as the art that now, in all its existence, has become poetry.[23]

Here, too, there is the idea of an art which is particular, but at the same time has in itself and represents all the individual arts. Even in this case, the privileged position in the systematic organization is conferred by the verbal aspect of producing an art in the medium of language. Compared to the other arts, finally, for Solger, too, poetry is invested with the greatest universality:

> Poetry is the universal art; it is the idea that modifies and determines itself. The opposites of reality in it cannot form different arts, but only different kinds of poetry. However, the idea cannot be considered as an abstract idea; it must have its entire existence in itself, present itself entirely in reality, limit itself by means of its opposites and thereby become objective. Also poetry and the idea that lives in it must assume a reality, which appears, however, only as the reality of the active idea, not of the object. If we did not recognize the active idea everywhere, poetry would not be the way through which the idea creates reality for itself.[24]

Nevertheless, it is in Hegel's work and, specifically, in the *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (both in the edition published by Hotho between 1835-38/1842, and in all the manuscripts of the students' notebooks) that the guiding role of poetry comes to light in all its power, reaffirming what was present in previous systems of art. This allows us to attribute to the Stuttgart philosopher, by the extension and clarity in his proposal, the role of the representative of this tendency, attributed to him by Adorno in the statement presented at the beginning of this overview.

For Hegel, poetry is "the most accomplished art, the art κατ'ἐξοχήν".[25] One of the characteristics that determines it as the main art of the system is how it moves more and more away from the sensible aspect to approach, more than the other arts, the spiritual dimension. Freeing itself from the "importance of the material",[26] the internal relationship between imagination and the external world is modified: poetry's medium is not constituted by something sensibly material, but imagination itself becomes the material that

[23] K.W.F. Solger, *Erwin. Vier Gespräche über das Schöne und die Kunst*, ed. by W. Henckmann, Fink, München 1971, p. 223; my trans.

[24] K.W.F. Solger, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. by G. Pinna, Meiner, Hamburg 2017, p. 184; my trans.

[25] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik. Nach Hegel, im Sommer 1826. Mitschrift Friedrich Carl Hermann Victor von Kehler*, ed. by A. Gethmann-Siefert and B. Collenberg-Plotnikov with the collaboration of F. Iannelli and K. Berr, Fink, München 2004, p. 197; my trans.

[26] G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik III*, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 15, ed. by E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1970, p. 232; Eng. trans. by T.M. Knox, *Hegel's Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1975, p. 966.

poetry elaborates. Its content is "the spiritual presence-to-self existing in an element that belongs to spirit itself".[27] This makes poetry reach the highest level of depth and freedom in relation to what constitutes the essence of art:

> For the nature of poetry coincides in general with the conception of the beauty of art and works of art as such, since the poetic imagination differs from the imagination in the visual arts and music where, owing to the kind of material in which it intends to work, it is restricted in its creation in many ways and driven in separate and one-sided directions. The poetic imagination, per contra, is subject only to the essential demands of an Ideal and artistically adequate mode of representation.[28]

The intimate contact with what is most authentically close to the concept of art allows poetic art, compared to the other arts, to develop more freely and in multiple directions.[29] For this reason, the breadth of its possibilities in terms of expressive capacity and the richness of the choice of representational content is almost unlimited and makes it the "total art".[30] Because of its spiritual dimension poetry belongs, from a systematic point of view, to the romantic arts, but the absence of limitations means that it does not have to historically identify itself with a specific art form (symbolic, classical, romantic); poetry effectively crosses them all, thus becoming "universal art".[31] Here, too, the aspects of universality and completeness draw poetry's profile. Literary art sums up in itself the characteristics that were dispersed in the other determined arts and, in this, lies the leading role of poetry.[32]

[27] G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I. Nachschriften zu den Kollegien der Jahre 1820/21 und 1823* (Nachschrift Hotho 1823), in G.W.F. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 28, 1, ed. by N. Hebing, Meiner, Hamburg 2015, pp. 215-511, p. 486; Eng. trans. by R.B. Brown, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art. The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 2014, p. 407.

[28] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik III*, cit., p. 238; Eng. trans., p. 971. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik*, cit., p. 197; G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst. Vorlesungen von 1826*, ed. by A. Gethmann-Siefert, J.-I. Kwon, and K. Berr, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2005, p. 223.

[29] Cf. S. Vizzardelli, *La trasversalità estetica della poesia in Hegel*, in "Quaderni di Estetica e Critica", I (1996), pp. 41-66, p. 47.

[30] G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 14, ed. by E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1970, p. 262; Eng. trans. by T.M. Knox, *Hegel's Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1975, p. 627. Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I. Nachschriften zu den Kollegien der Jahre 1820/21 und 1823* (Ascheberg 1820/1821), in G.W.F. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 28, 1, ed. by N. Hebing, Meiner, Hamburg 2015, pp. 1-214, p. 290.

[31] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik III*, cit., p. 233; Eng. trans., p. 967.

[32] I have tried to set forth a more thorough description of the model role of poetry in Hegel in F. Campana, *The End of Literature, Hegel, and the Contemporary Novel*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2019, pp. 135-144. Cf. also F.D. Wagner, *Hegels Philosophie der Dichtung*, Bouvier, Bonn 1974, pp. 73-125; M. Ophälders, 'Poesia e morte dell'arte', in M. Farina and A.L. Siani (eds.), *L'estetica di Hegel*, il Mulino, Bologna 2014, pp. 213-228.

However, poetry's role as a model for the other arts is by no means non-problematic, and its very position at the apex of the system makes its guiding role somewhat ambiguous. Its liberation from sensible materiality, which is the proper character of the spiritual form of art, brings it dangerously close, one might say, to the other two forms of absolute spirit, namely religion and philosophy, which share with poetry (and not with the other individual arts) the use of the verbal medium.[33] Even if the high degree of spirituality succeeds in bridging the negative treatment of the sensible dimension, it belongs to its very nature to be at risk of stepping outside the boundaries of its proper form and mutating into something other than what it is.[34] In this condition, of model and exception, is expressed the paradoxical character of poetry in Hegel, that is, of the art that is supremely art but, at the same time, of the art closest to what can be considered its own end.[35]

Hegel therefore represents – in this peculiar and partly problematic way – the tendency of the first half of the century to conceive art as a system that has poetry as its culmination. The three positions that have been quickly touched upon, even in the diversity of their general philosophical approaches, almost seem to echo each other in emphasizing the centrality of poetry. In order to show the predominance of the paradigm in the first half of the century even in authors not strictly belonging to the same political-cultural context, it is worth at least remembering that the same tendency, with different modalities and intentions, is also present in a large part of early Romanticism. Just think of the theory of "progressive universal poetry" in fragment 116 of Schlegel's "Athenaeum", in which poetry does not represent or lead in relation to other individual artistic genres, but has the more general task of crossing and including – almost encompassing, one might say – the scientific disciplines and other areas of culture as a whole.[36]

[33] Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke in 20 Bänden*, vol. 14, ed. by E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1970, p. 261; Eng. trans. by T.M. Knox, *Hegel's Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1975, p. 626-627.

[34] In the version of the *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* published by Hotho, we can read: "poetry appears 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 representation 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" (Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik III*, cit., pp. 234-235; Eng. trans., p. 968, modified trans.). Cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I. Nachschriften zu den Kollegien der Jahre 1820/21 und 1823* [Nachschrift Hotho 1823], cit., p. 486-487; Eng. trans., p. 408.

[35] Cf. Campana, *The End of Literature, Hegel, and the Contemporary Novel*, cit., p. 142.

[36] Cf. F. Schlegel, *Die Athenäums-Fragmente*, in Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe,

3.2 *The Musical Paradigm*

Within this frame, which represents the philosophical reflection on art of the first part of the nineteenth century in a significant – although not exhaustive – way, Schopenhauer's proposal exhibits the second trend in this discourse. His view on the subject does not play the same role as the Hegelian one; that is, it does not represent a great synthesis of a previous season already widely developed, but rather initiates a subsequent season. In his work music takes the place of poetry as a paradigmatic art. In this context occurs the shift – in some ways epochal, although not as radical as those that will take place in the next century – within the system of arts. Although some premises in this direction had already appeared,[37] it is with Schopenhauer that we are faced with a turning point in the conception of the systems of individual arts and in the general concept of art. If, for Hegel, poetry is the art that more than any other represents the general concept of art and, at the same time, expresses the paradoxical condition of being an art on the border with something else that is not art, so too in Schopenhauer music has a leading role, but is positioned almost outside the field of arts. After having considered the other particular arts, in §52 of Book III of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1819)[38] Schopenhauer addresses music, noting that it "remains excluded, and was bound to be excluded, from our consideration, for in the systematic connexion of our discussion there was no fitting place for it".[39] The somewhat exceptional character that was explicitly attributed to poetry by Hegel is now attributed to music. Music finds itself isolated from the other arts, because for Schopenhauer, at least on the surface, it is not possible to find in music the imitative character present in the other arts. As had happened with

vol. 2.1, *Charakteristiken und Kritiken I* (1796-1801), ed. by H. Eichner, Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, München-Padeborn-Wien, Thomas Verlag, Zürich 1967, Fr. 116, pp. 182-183; Eng. trans. by P. Firchow, *Philosophical Fragments*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis-London 1991, pp. 31-32.

[37] The most significant proposals of Romanticism concern literature, but it would be wrong not to consider it as a multifaceted phenomenon, within which there are also thinkers, such as for example W.H. Wackenroder and E.T.A. Hoffman, who had already placed music at the center of their view and will have a considerable influence on the second part of the century. Cf. P. D'Angelo, *L'estetica del romanticismo*, Bologna, il Mulino 1997, pp. 182-191; E. Fubini, *L'estetica musicale dal Settecento a oggi*, Einaudi, Torino 2001, pp. 115-120 and pp. 139-146.

[38] The first edition of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* is dated 1819, but as known will have a considerable success only towards the middle of the century.

[39] A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. 1, Haffmans, Zürich 1988, p. 509; Eng. trans. by E.F.J. Payne, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1, Dover Publications, New York, 1969, p. 256.

poetry in previous authors, however, music acquires a deeper and more authentic meaning than the other arts. It is able to reveal us to ourselves in a more radical way; it gains the self of the world more authentically; it brings to expression something truer and more powerful because it is understood without mediation by all. And, in the specific terminology of the author, it is able to express the will in the purest way, because it does not express only the image of ideas – it does not express "a shadow", says Schopenhauer, as other arts do – but goes to "the essence"[40] of things and becomes the objectification of the will itself.[41] In this sense music becomes the individual art that in the highest degree expresses the potential of art with respect to the world of phenomena. In comparison with the other arts, it succeeds in having in itself that universality which until then was proper to poetry: music is "an entirely universal language, whose distinctness surpasses even that of the world of perception itself".[42] In this way, with respect to the other arts and with respect, for example, to conceptual formulations, it brings to light something original, absolute, preceding everything else; it is the universal art, first among the others, prior to all the arts and to the world itself, because it expresses a more hidden and primordial dimension of the world.

This view leads to a rather significant change in the conception of art and the arts system in the second half of the nineteenth century. In considering music the center of the system of arts Schopenhauer, first of all, abandons the primacy of the imitative quality as a relevant quality of the same system, since music is the least suitable for this purpose among the arts. Moreover, he does not consider as decisive the possibility of a verbal articulation similar to that of thought; consequently, he does not feel it neces-

[40] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, cit., p. 513; Eng. trans., p. 257.

[41] Schopenhauer expresses himself as follows: "Thus music is as immediate an objectification and copy of the whole will as the world itself is, indeed as the Ideas are, the multiplied phenomenon of which constitutes the world of individual things. Therefore music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a copy of the will itself, the objectivity of which are the Ideas" (Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, cit., p. 513; Eng. trans., p. 257). The idea of music as a more original language, capable of expressing a deeper dimension than the literary one, was already present in authors such as Herder and Hamann (cf. Fubini, *L'estetica musicale dal Settecento a oggi*, cit., pp. 109-115).

[42] Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, cit., p. 521; Eng. trans., p. 256. Now it is music that takes on the greatest expressive capacity: "All possible efforts, stirrings, and manifestations of the will, all the events that occur within man himself and are included by the reasoning faculty in the wide, negative concept of feeling, can be expressed by the infinite number of possible melodies, but always in the universality of mere form without the material, always only according to the in-itself, not to the phenomenon, as it were the innermost soul of the phenomenon without the body" (Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, cit., pp. 521-523; Eng. trans., p. 262).

sary for art to be represented by that particular expression which could approach, precisely by means of the word, more traditional dimensions of (verbal) rationality. Here the model of art is revealing the substratum, the hidden or even unconscious level of that rationality. This is a view that will be established in the following decades, developing and deepening in various directions, first of all those of Nietzsche and Wagner.

Although we can distinguish different phases of Nietzsche's thought (and different phases of his relationship with Wagner, which in part also determine some variations among the moments of his thought), music stands as the constitutive and central art in the general concept of art from the beginnings until the end of his intellectual journey (a journey that also sees him as a discreet pianist, composer, and music critic for the "Deutsche Allgemeine"). Already in his *Das griechische Musikdrama* (1870) he speaks of music as "the true universal language that is understood everywhere"[43] and, shortly thereafter, it is precisely in the choral and musical dimension that Nietzsche identifies the Dionysian power that allows tragedy proper to come to light in *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (1872).[44] In that context, the young Nietzsche identifies in music a sort of primordial principle of art, prior to any subsequent superstructure; music is the force that pervades an art that is gradually eroded by the representation of the everyday present in Euripides' tragedies, whose theater is nothing more than the "mask" of rationalism circulated by Socrates.[45] Here music is not so much the art that stands as the first among the arts because it includes *ex post*, at the end of a systematic path, all the other particular arts. In this case, it is the first of the arts, because it precedes the particular arts and gives the most original and authentic version of them, the version that has been lost with the passage of time, which corresponds to the truest idea of art that human beings have experienced and that could be recovered, in Nietzsche's

[43] F. Nietzsche, *Das griechische Musikdrama*, in F. Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, ed. by G. Colli and M. Montinari, vol. 1, de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 1988, pp. 515-532, p. 529; Eng. trans. by P. Bishop, *Das griechische Musikdrama. The Greek Music Drama*, Contra Mundum Press, New York 2013, p. 32.

[44] Nietzsche write, «the very element which defines the character of Dionysiac music (and thus of music generally): the power of its sound to shake us to our very foundations, the unified stream of melody and the quite incomparable world of harmony» (F. Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I-IV. Nachgelassene Schriften 1870-1873. Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. by G. Colli and M. Montinari, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München and de Gruyter, New York-Berlin, 1988, p. 33; Eng. trans. by R. Speirs, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. by R. Geuss and R. Speirs, Cambridge Universtity Press, Cambridge *et al.* 2007, p. 21).

[45] Cf. Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I-IV. Nachgelassene Schriften 1870-1873. Kritische Studienausgabe*, cit., pp. 81-88; Eng. trans., pp. 59-64.

opinion at the time, precisely thanks to Wagner's work.

In the non-linear or systematic continuation of his thought, the conviction of the absolute priority of music remains: in several writings from 1888, we find a recurring and effective statement, namely, that "without music, life would be a mistake".[46] In his later considerations, Nietzsche goes beyond Schopenhauerian and Wagnerian views, distancing himself from them more and more, further articulating his position on the relationship between music and verbal language, but ultimately insisting on the need to make music prevail over words.[47]

Certainly, the primacy of music in Nietzsche's work derives, from a theoretical point of view, from Schopenhauerian influence (especially in the first period of his work). But there is no doubt that it was also stimulated, precisely, by the figure of Richard Wagner, who constituted first a positive reference point and then a completely polemical one.

In his musical praxis, but also in his theoretical writings such as *Die Kunst und die Revolution* (1849), *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1850), and *Oper und Drama* (1951) (whose positions cross and are inextricably intertwined with the artistic gesture), Wagner describes the project of conceiving musical drama in the terms of the "total artwork". The proposal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in which – at least on a theoretical level – the perfect coincidence of words, notes and dramatic action is aspired to can be read as a further way of interpreting the organization of the arts system. In this case, the starting point is inevitably music and, compared to the views of Nietzsche and in part to those of Schopenhauer, the theoretical perspective proposed is not so much that of the priority of music as an eccen-

[46] This sentence occurs in the letter to Georg Brandes dated 27/03/1888 (F. Nietzsche, *Briefe. Januar 1887-Januar 1889*, in *Nietzsche Briefwechsel. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by G. Colli and M. Montinari with the collaboration of H. Anania-Hess, 3, 5, de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 1984, p. 278-280, p. 280). A partially different version already appeared in a letter dated 15/01/1888 to Heinrich Köselitz ("Life without music is simply a mistake"; Nietzsche, *Briefe. Januar 1887-Januar 1889*, cit., pp. 231-233, p. 232). The sentence then occurs in posthumous fragments 15 [118] and 16 [24] of the beginning and summer of 1888 (F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente. Anfang 1888 bis Anfang Januar 1889*, in *Nietzsche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by G. Colli and M. Montinari, 8, 3, de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 1972, pp. 271-274, p. 272 e p. 284). It finally appears in *Twilight of the Idols*, written in 1888 and published the following year (F. Nietzsche, *Der Fall Wagner. Götzen-Dämmerung. Nachgelassene Schriften (August 1888-Anfang Januar 1889): Der Antichrist. Ecce Homo. Dionysos-Dithyramben. Nietzsche contra Wagner*, in *Nietzsche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by G. Colli and M. Montinari, 6, 3, de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 1969, p. 58; Eng. trans. by J. Norman, ed. by A. Ridley and J. Norman, *The Anti-Christ. Ecce Homo. Twilight of the Idols. And Other Writings*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge *et al.* 2005, p. 160).

[47] Cf. Th. Ahrend, *Das Verhältnis von Musik und Sprache bei Nietzsche*, in "Nietzsche-forschung", 2 (1995), pp. 153-166.

tric art with respect to the system (perhaps because it is original); rather, music, through scenic representation, is conceived of as a guide, which crosses the other particular arts and arises as a large enclosure in which the different arts present in it seek a balanced equilibrium among themselves as parts within the whole.[48] Wagner – who precisely theorizes a praxis that tries to realize – identifies the means by which to produce a unitary whole capable of resuming and reviving a mythical dimension now lost. We see this, for instance, in the elaboration of the so-called "endless melody", intended to break the patterns of traditional Italian and French melodrama; in the use of the *Leitmotiv*, a connecting thread able to amalgamate different situations; and in the strategy of making the orchestra no longer a mere accompaniment, but a true protagonist of the musical action.[49] In some ways, this conception could be compared to the early Romantic concept of progressive universal poetry, in which, starting from a specific perspective (in that case poetic art), an attempt is made to encompass the entirety of artistic expressions. The meaning of the role of music in Wagner therefore seems partly different from that encountered in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, but the starting point is the same. Indeed, there is no doubt that Wagner's proposal is part of the trend of the second half of the nineteenth century in which music is at the center of the system, and it is clear that it further confirms the shift of the center of gravity of the arts system to a dimension that is no longer literary.

4. *Meanings of the Paradigm Shift*

The replacement of poetry by music in some of the most relevant aesthetic perspectives of the nineteenth century in Germany delineates an epochal moment in the conception of art. It is a retreat of literary art and an advancement of musical art that, if not yet definitively upsetting, begins in part to disturb the solidity of the very concept of art. This passage is an indication of the need to identify a different way of thinking about art and thinking through art; it expresses a change in aesthetic conception that is a change in

[48] With respect to the hierarchy of the arts and to the difference from the Hegelian approach, cf. C. Dahlhaus, *Wagners Konzeption des musikalischen Dramas*, Bosse, Regensburg 1971, p. 13. For a recent study of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, see H.M. Brown, *The Quest for the Gesamtkunstwerk and Richard Wagner*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2016.

[49] Within the vast bibliography on Wagner, a recent volume that analyzes these Wagnerian artistic techniques (and their influence) is M. Bribitzer-Stull M., *Understanding the Leitmotif. From Wagner to Hollywood Film Music*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2015.

the kind of rationality that is intended to be brought into play. This movement from one paradigm to another is quite significant within the artistic context and foreshadows, in minor but significant terms, the upheavals of the following century, the contemporary "end of art" as a radical rethinking of the artistic forms that describe the overall meaning of the word "art".

From a strictly philosophical-artistic point of view, there are two noteworthy elements of this shift. First, there is the strong distance from the secular mimetic attitude of art. Music can mainly evoke or reveal something invisible to the eyes, maybe something original and profound, while to a lesser extent it is suitable for the description and imitation of reality. The mimetic attitude, mainly due to the emergence of cinema and photography, will later be one of the first elements to enter into crisis with the work of the twentieth-century avant-garde. In the second place, there is the choice of distancing oneself from the verbal articulation proper to poetry which, in the first half of the century, went hand in hand with the affirmation of reasoning on art, recently constituted as a scientific discipline. From the second half of the century onwards, the scientific level, based on a verbal dimension, and art will find it more difficult to intertwine and new kinds of rationality (or, in some ways, irrationality) will emerge in both cases. One could say that the scientific, rational and, above all, verbal dimension was no longer able to account for artistic experience, which seemed to enter territories less comprehensible to ordinary logic and capable of linguistic explanation. The search for a new rationality, non-linear and not directly recognizable, is also part of twentieth-century developments, for example, in the way in which artistic genres, mixing and mingling with each other, try to find new ways – not necessarily irrational, but productive of a different and new rationality – to express themselves, until they reach real languages difficult to categorize with conventional rationality and artistic models of the tradition.

This abandonment by art of the more classically rational dimension is also reflected in two further elements. On the one hand, philosophies of art with "literary traction" seek a largely systematic configuration. In the case of Schelling and, above all, Hegel, this is a necessary prerogative of the discourse on art in order for it to be valid, i.e., scientific.[50] The case of Schopenhauer, especially

[50] As far as Solger and the *Frühromantik* are concerned, the discourse is partly different, in the sense that the need for the system is more problematic and sometimes there is even an aversion to such a concept, but there is nevertheless an overall look that tries not to leave aside the aspects of reality in their multiplicity.

in the systematic structure and attitude of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, is indicative of his role as a watershed between one tendency and the other (in fact, the discourse of his later writings is different). On the other hand, we find Nietzsche and his search for the most authentic truth through the destruction of systematic unity, aphoristic writing, and only partially linear sequences of thought.[51] The second element, then, that can be deduced from the constitution of the two groups of thinkers, is that of the belonging of the literary paradigm to the academic sphere (an aspect that goes hand in hand with the search for a systematic unity and a rational, conceptual and verbal attitude towards art), while the musical paradigm exhibits, in its representatives, difficulties with the university institution (Schopenhauer), or a progressive rejection of it (Nietzsche) or even a belonging of a different kind, more specifically artistic (Wagner).

Moreover, from a more general point of view – which might be called the perspective of a philosophy of art history – a critic and literary theorist such as William Marx identifies in the nineteenth century a progressive affirmation of a "new paradigm", that of music, within an epochal process of "devalorization", of "loss of prestige" of literature, a tendency that puts literature in the background in the overall system of knowledge and leaves room for other forms, such as music.[52] This tendency to "devalorization" is intuited also from the historical-conceptual point of view. As noted above, the authors of the first tendency, in fact, mainly use the term "*Poesie*", in order to indicate the complex of literary art (while they use the term "*Lyrik*" to mean what we nowadays properly call "poetry"); usually, furthermore, "*Poesie*" is in a dialectical relationship with "*Prose*", which generally indicates literature in its coming to terms with modernity and therefore in its progressive loss of its primordial character and power. Such authors tend not to use – especially on a technical level – the term "*Literatur*". The latter will definitively abandon the generic description of *humanae litterae* (or *belles lettres*) and will assert itself, following a bumpy and tortuous road, in its current meaning only during the second half of the nineteenth century. In this way, also from a linguistic point of view, it is possible to perceive in the passage from "Poesie" to "Literatur" a process of disempowering literature in the context of the arts. On the opposite side, it is precisely in the course of

[51] Cf. B. Greiner, *Friedrich Nietzsche. Versuch und Versuchung in seinen Aphorismen*, Fink, München 1972.

[52] W. Marx, *L'adieu à la littérature. Histoire d'une dévalorisation XVIII^e-XX^e siècle*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris 2005, especially pp. 88-90.

the nineteenth century[53] that some of the fundamental concepts concerning music become established. As Lydia Goehr has shown, the very idea of "musical work", as a complete and unique entity, written by an individual who is socially recognized as its author, is affirmed only after 1800 with the "Beethoven Paradigm" and gradually established itself over the course of the century.[54] There is therefore an opposite movement, taking up William Marx, of the "valorization" of musical art, which had never been seen before. And this, in addition to the philosophical-artistic reasons mentioned above, is for socio-cultural reasons, first of all the affirmation and widespread recognition of the figure of the composer, the foundation of music academies and public societies, and the large-scale spread of institutional spaces in which communities can enjoy music, from concert halls to opera houses.

The devaluation of literature and the corresponding valorization of music show, even on a socio-cultural level, how the traditional way of conceiving the system of arts (and therefore art in general), through a system based on literature as the main art, seems to no longer be sufficient to express the kind of rationality that the art of the time requires. The shift towards an art such as music, which expresses itself in a field that does not contemplate some of the main features of literature (from mimetic possibility to verbal articulation), shows the need to explore new and different approaches with respect to the way of thinking about the artistic fact. Through art emerges the need to change modes of reasoning and this emerges precisely from the way in which the systems of art and art in general are conceived. This is a need that, with decidedly greater force, we find in the context of art after the "end of art", where the languages proposed are unconventional and where we often even have difficulty proposing categories to describe them. However, it is not a necessity that arises suddenly, and this first shift from poetic art to musical art, with the search for different ways to conceive art, can be interpreted as the first fracture that heralds subsequent upheavals.

5. *Conclusions*

As much as historically wide interpretations leave room for the possibility of identifying counterexamples and parallel histories that

[53] Cf. R. Rosenberg, 'Literarisch/Literatur', in K. Bark *et al.* (eds.), *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden. Medien-Popular*, vol. 4, Mezler, Stuttgart-Weimar 2002, pp. 665-693.

[54] L. Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works. An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2007, pp. 204-242.

remain below the radar with respect to general trends,[55] an attempt has been made in this article to show how there is an epochal shift from poetry (i.e., literature) to music between the first and second part of the nineteenth century, which seems rich in implications for what the art world experienced successively. This shift has many reasons and expresses various meanings that all contribute to producing a decisive upheaval within the system of the arts.

First of all, there are philosophical-artistic meanings, such as the abandonment of mimetic and verbal dimensions. These are accompanied by deeper reasons that could be summarized in the fact that the verbal, conceptual, and systematic (and consequently also academic) dimension no longer seems to be sufficient to deal with art, and instead there emerges the urge to explore more obscure, evocative, less directly comprehensible and even irrational levels. This has led to a de-valorization of literature and a parallel valorization of music. Finally, there is a whole series of historical-material reasons (from the creation of new spaces to the emergence of new social figures) that contribute to describe and, in part, encourage the shift from literature to music.

In general, shifting the center of gravity from literature to music is only a first step in the subsequently more thorough destabilization in the arts system, ruptures caused by what has been identified as the contemporary "end of art". A movement of this kind expresses the need to find new and different ways to produce and enjoy art; this need has to do, more broadly, with the way of conceiving art and the world through art. The shift analyzed here represents the decisive beginning of such ruptures, enabling us to glimpse the logic behind some of the most significant changes in the concept of art in the twentieth century.

[55] Indeed, one can identify counterexamples to the proposed framework. On the one hand, there is the presence of a philosophy of music at the center of some discussions, for example, in the Romantic context (see the already cited examples of W.H. Wackenroder and E.T.A. Hoffman); on the other, one can identify the persistence of some aesthetic theories with literature at their peak even after the middle of the century (for example, F. Thierisch, F.T. Vischer, K.R. Köstlin, E. Hartmann, M. Schalser; cf. Titzmann, *Strukturwandel der philosophischen Ästhetik 1800-1880. Der Symbolbegriff als Paradigma*, cit., pp. 52-53 e 57-65; Di Liberti, *Il Sistema della arti. Storia e ipotesi*, cit., pp. 97-98). These cases, however, only further articulate a picture where the underlying tendencies, those that succeed in most faithfully restoring the complexity of an era, seem to remain those of a shift from a greater focus on the literary work of art, as far as the first part of the century is concerned, to that on the musical dimension, in the second part.

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