

Karsten Harries

Contributions to Phenomenology 57

# Art Matters

*A Critical Commentary on Heidegger's  
"The Origin of the Work of Art"*



Springer

## ART MATTERS

# CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHENOMENOLOGY

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Volume 57

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# ART MATTERS

A Critical Commentary on Heidegger's  
"The Origin of the Work of Art"

*by*

KARSTEN HARRIES

 Springer

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## Preface

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After *Being and Time*, “The Origin of the Work of Art” may well be Heidegger’s most widely read and referred to work. It not only marks the midpoint and center of his path of thinking; but, developing earlier themes and anticipating much of what was still to come, more perspicuously than any other of his works, it presents us in a nutshell with the whole Heidegger. It is my hope that this critical commentary will demonstrate that we have no better introduction to his thought.

Certainly, no other work by Heidegger has had as profound and enduring an impact on my own philosophical development. I first discovered the essay in 1958, my first year in graduate school, when Heidegger was just beginning to arouse broad interest in this country’s philosophical community. *The Meaning of Modern Art* (1968) hints at how the essay helped shape my thinking about the present situation of art. “Das befreite Nichts” (1970), my contribution to *Durchblicke*, the *Festschrift* for Heidegger’s 80th birthday, attempted to develop some of these ideas with more explicit reference to “The Origin of the Work of Art.” How important the essay has been to my work in the philosophy of architecture is shown by *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (2001). But it was not questions concerning art and architecture that have mattered most to me; of greater import has been the problem of nihilism that I had tackled in my dissertation (1961).

Given my understanding of the essay’s importance, it is hardly surprising that over the years I should have repeatedly dedicated seminars to this text, so in the spring of 1994, the fall of 1999, the fall of 2001, and, now for the last time, the spring of 2008. What follows are my notes for these seminars, revised to minimize repetitions and amended in a number of places to take into account some of the relevant literature.

My greatest debt is to the students in these seminars. Their questions and contributions were indispensable. I also owe a special debt to George A. Schrader, who first encouraged me to read this essay and who was to direct my dissertation on nihilism, to Hans-Georg Gadamer, with whom I had many fruitful discussions and who was responsible for the invitation to contribute to the Heidegger *Festschrift*, to Otto Pöggeler, who so clearly understood the importance of the essay to my work, including even to my book on the Bavarian Rococo Church, to Eduard Führ, who helped me become clearer about what Heidegger still has to contribute to our understanding of the present state of architecture, and to Dermot Moran, friend and fellow phenomenologist, who encouraged me to gather these notes for the present publication.

July 15, 2008  
Hamden, Connecticut

K. Harries

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## Abbreviations

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All references in the text are to the volumes of the Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, published by Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, listed below. When I use a translation, the page reference follows that to the German original, separated by a /.

- G2.            *Sein und Zeit* (1927)  
                 *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward  
                 Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962)
- G4.            *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (1936–1968)
- G5.            *Holzwege* (1935–1946)  
                 “The Origin of the Work of Art,” trans. Albert Hofstadter,  
                 *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper and Row,  
                 1971
- G6.1.        Nietzsche 1. (1936–1939)
- G7.            *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1936–1953)  
                 “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” trans. Albert Hofstadter,  
                 *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper and Row,  
                 1971
- G9.            *Wegmarken* (1919–1958)  
                 “What is Metaphysics?” trans. David Farrell Krell, *Basic  
                 Writings*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977, 95–112
- G13.         *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* (1910–1976)
- G14.         *Zur Sache des Denkens* (1962–1964)  
                 “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,” trans.  
                 Joan Stambaugh, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell.  
                 New York: Harper and Row, 1977, 373–392
- G16.         *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges*  
                 (1910–1976)  
                 “The Self Assertion of the German University,” “The  
                 Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts,” “Der Spiegel  
                 Interview with Martin Heidegger,” *Martin Heidegger and  
                 National Socialism. Questions and Answers*, ed. Günther  
                 Neske and Emil Kettering, trans. Lisa Harries. New York:  
                 Paragon, 1990
- G17.         Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung (WS  
                 1923–1924)
- G19.         *Platon: Sophistes* (WS 1924–1925)
- G26.         *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von  
                 Leibniz* (SS 1928)

- G27. *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (WS 1928–1929)
- G29/30. *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt, Endlichkeit, Einsamkeit* (WS 1929–1930)
- G34. *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet* (WS 1931–1932)
- G36/37. *Sein und Wahrheit. 1. Die Grundfrage der Philosophie* (SS 1933). 2. *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (WS 1933–1934).
- G39. *Hölderlins Hymnen “Germanien” und “Der Rhein”* (WS 1934–1935)
- G40. *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (SS 1935)  
*Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim. New York: Anchor Books, 1961
- G41. *Die Frage nach dem Ding. Zu Kants Lehre von den transzendentalen Grundsätzen* (WS 1935)
- G43. *Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst* (WS 1936–1937)
- G45. *Grundfragen der Philosophie. Ausgewählte “Probleme” der “Logik”* (WS 1937–1938)
- G56/57. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie. (1) Die Idee der Philosophie und das Weltanschauungsproblem* (post war semester 1919); (2) *Phänomenologie und transzendente Wertphilosophie* (SS 1919); (3) *Anhang: Über das Wesen der Universität und des akademischen Studiums* (SS 1919)
- G60. *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens. (1) Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion* (WS 1920–1921); (2) *Augustinus und der Neuplatonismus* (SS 1921); (3) *Die philosophischen Grundlagen der mittelalterlichen Mystik* (WS 1918–1919)
- G65. *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (1936–1938)  
*Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning) Studies in Continental Thought*, trans Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000

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## Introduction: The End of Art?

### 1. Questioning Aesthetics

This critical commentary on Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" is part of a continuing attempt to address some questions raised by Hegel's pronouncement that "art is, and remains for us, on the side of its highest destiny, a thing of the past,"<sup>1</sup> questions that, as Heidegger recognized, concern much more than just the future of art.

Given that much of the art we admire most today was created long after Hegel declared the end of art "on the side of its highest destiny" in the 1820's, we may be tempted to dismiss such a declaration as just another example of philosophy losing touch with reality. And yet, the state of the current art world has made it more difficult to simply dismiss talk of the end or death of art.<sup>2</sup> Does art still matter? How? What kind of art?

What is at issue is hinted at by some remarks Heidegger makes in the Epilogue to the essay:

Almost from the time when specialized thinking about art and the artist began, this thought was called aesthetic. Aesthetics takes the work of art as an object, the object of *aisthesis*, of sensuous apprehension in the wide sense. Today we call this apprehension experience. The way in which man experiences art is supposed to give information about its nature. Experience is the source that is standard not only for art appreciation and enjoyment, but also for artistic creation. Everything is an experience. Yet perhaps experience is the element in which art dies. This dying occurs so slowly that it takes a few centuries (G5, 67/79).

To understand this remark we need to understand the aesthetic approach to art that is here called into question. Why should Heidegger tie this approach to the dying of art? How is "art" understood here?

We are given a first answer by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's dissertation of 1735, which not only helped to inaugurate a specifically modern approach to poetry and beyond that to art, but also gave us the word "aesthetics" to name what has developed into a main branch of philosophy.<sup>3</sup> In the course of his discussion, Baumgarten likens the successful poem to the world, more precisely to the world as Leibniz describes it: a perfect whole having its sufficient reason in God.<sup>4</sup> In this world nothing is superfluous, nothing is missing: everything is just as it should be. When Baumgarten insists that the poem be like a world, he insists that it, too, be experienced as such

a perfect whole. As Paul Valéry was to claim much later, in the poem “well-known things and beings—or rather the ideas that represent them—somehow change in value. They attract one another, they are connected in ways quite different from the ordinary; they become (if you will permit the expression) musicalized, resonant, and, as it were, harmonically related.”<sup>5</sup> To demand that the poem be a perfect whole is to claim that in the successful poem every word is experienced as having to appear just as in fact it does. This includes what Valéry calls the seemingly impossible demand that sound and sense become indissoluble: “it is the poet’s business to give us the feeling of an intimate union between the word and the mind.”<sup>6</sup> Poetry is the magical incarnation of meaning in the word. This magic is lost when we insist on wresting a meaning from the poem. As Archibald MacLeish demanded, a poem should not mean, but be. It should draw attention to itself as a self-sufficient presence. What matters is the poem’s inner coherence, not that it correspond to or reveal in any way what is.

We can generalize and say the same of the work of art: It should convince us by its inner coherence. Its point is not to mean something beyond itself. Beauty, on the aesthetic approach, has little to do with truth. The beautiful work of art, so understood, does not so much reveal reality as it offers a vacation from reality. Emphasis on the unity and self-sufficiency of the aesthetic object leads thus quite naturally to an emphasis on aesthetic distance, on that separation of art from reality Kant was to insist on in the *Critique of Judgment*. Such distance is implied by that disinterested pleasure in which Kant found the key to the essence of aesthetic experience.

“The Origin of the Work of Art” calls such an understanding into question, raising the question, why, at this stage of his philosophical development, such questioning should have become so important to Heidegger. As Heinrich Wiegand Petzet recalls, already in 1930 Heidegger had become convinced of the need to not just revise, but completely break with aesthetics: “Conventional aesthetics did not work anymore.”<sup>7</sup> Such conviction is not unrelated to a growing conviction that art does matter and Heidegger guards against a possible misunderstanding of his remark—“perhaps experience is the element in which art dies”—by glossing it in the Reclam edition (1960) of the essay with the explanation: “This sentence, however, does not assert that art as such has come to an end. This would only be the case if experience were to remain the only element for art. But everything depends on moving from experience into being-there (*Da-sein*), and this is to say: to gain an altogether different ‘element’ for the ‘becoming’ of art” (G5, 67). The essay attempts to move in this direction.

Challenging Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann and Joseph J. Kockelmans, Otto Pöggeler has insisted that “The Origin of the Work of Art” should not be read as a work in aesthetics or even as a philosophy of art. Not that “The Origin of the Work of Art” does not make a significant contribution to the philosophy of art, even if Heidegger himself in the later Reclam edition denied that the essay offers a “philosophy of art,” insisting that what matters is “the question about Being.”<sup>8</sup> No doubt, that question is what finally mattered to him. But precisely by looking at art from this perspective, he casts new light

on art. What makes this essay significant certainly includes the way it invites us to think the essence of art in opposition to the aesthetic approach.

Challenging aesthetics, Heidegger also challenges our modern world, for, if he is right, the aesthetic approach and modernity belong together—one point of this commentary is to examine that connection. Uncertainly “The Origin of the Work of Art” gestures towards a postmodern understanding of art; and not just of art, but, and more importantly, of reality. The question of Being is indeed fundamental.

To fully appreciate what is at stake, “The Origin of the Work of Art” should be read together with “The Age of the World Picture,” the essay that follows it in *Holzwege* (GS, 75–113). In “The Age of the World Picture” (1938) Heidegger addresses the threat the world picture that rules modernity poses to humanity. The aesthetic approach, as will become clearer in the following, may be understood as a response to this threat; but that response, Heidegger was convinced, betrays the promise of art: understanding art first of all in aesthetic terms, it denies art its essential ethical function. Tending to reduce all art to decoration in the broadest sense, not just of buildings but of lives, “the age of the world picture” may thus be understood as “the age of the decorated shed.”<sup>9</sup> But this reduction, as we shall see, threatens our humanity. “The Origin of the Work of Art” speaks to that threat.

## 2. Heidegger Contra Hegel

This is how the Heidegger student Walter Biemel understood the essay’s significance. In his Heideggerian *Philosophische Analysen zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (1969) we find thus the following remark: “The epoch in which the association with art reduced itself to an aesthetic observing has come to an end. This, however, is not to say that we cannot fall back into it again and again, since this way of approaching art seems to offer itself immediately, is most readily available, and makes the fewest demands on the observer.”<sup>10</sup> To say that “the epoch in which the association with art reduced itself to an aesthetic observing has come to an end” is not to claim that aesthetic observing has come to an end. Biemel grants that an aesthetic approach to art remains “most readily available.” But he insists that there is a sense in which developments in art allow us to claim that an epoch in which art was ruled by the aesthetic approach has ended.

But if there is indeed a sense in which the development of art in the twentieth century invites talk of an epoch having ended, an epoch in which both the practice and the theory of art were ruled by the aesthetic approach, do developments in art, say the turn to performance or concept art, support the claim that we find ourselves on the threshold of a post-aesthetic art that will return to art something of the significance that Hegel had denied it? Biemel certainly thought so. Following Heidegger, he took the task of art to be to reveal what he calls *die Art des herrschenden Weltbezugs*, “the mode of the ruling way of relating to the world.” The genuine work of art, according to

Biemel, reveals how we today encounter other entities, including especially other human beings, but also ourselves; reveals how we stand in the world, not so transparently that this stance becomes evident to all, but “in a kind of hieroglyphic writing that requires interpretation if it is to become understood.”<sup>11</sup> The work of art is understood here, as Hegel put it, as “only a certain manner of expressing and representing the true.”<sup>12</sup> This understanding of art serving truth presupposes what I shall call an ontological conception of the beautiful.<sup>13</sup>

As here stated, this conception is not particularly Hegelian—equally well one could point to Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas or Heidegger—to give just some examples. To tie it to a particular thinker would require a further determination of the meaning of truth—we shall return to this topic in a later chapter; but just this ontological function is denied to art in our modern age by Hegel, who figures so prominently in the Epilogue and may be said to shadow the entire essay.<sup>14</sup> Heidegger agrees: every artist today has to contend with “the essential destiny (*Geschick*) in which great art is no longer the necessary form for the presentation of the absolute—as Hegel saw it—and is therefore without a place. Its refuge today is the babbling turmoil in the delapidated shack called ‘society’”—Arthur Danto and George Dickie were to call that shack today’s “art world.”<sup>15</sup> Heidegger’s words were written only in 1972, in response to Wiegand Petzet’s biography of the painter Heinrich Vogeler, which to Heidegger seemed to confirm that it is the fate of the artist today not to “find the proper place for his art; nor is his art able to determine this place, either for it or for the one that is to come after.”<sup>16</sup> To be sure, in this letter Heidegger goes on to invoke uncertainly van Gogh and Cézanne as pointing perhaps to a less despairing understanding of the future of art. But, as already in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger finds it difficult to step out of the shadow cast by Hegel’s pronouncement.

It is important to know that the version of “The Origin of the Work of Art” we have was preceded by two earlier drafts. While the first, dating from 1931/1932 and never delivered as a lecture,<sup>17</sup> did not mention Hegel and concluded, guardedly optimistic, with the same Hölderlin quotation as the final version, the second version, delivered to the “Art Historical Society at Freiburg” on November 13, 1935, concluded with the more gloomy reflections on Hegel that were then relegated to the Epilogue. In a letter to Elisabeth Blochmann of December 20, 1935 Heidegger makes this interesting comment about the first draft, which he had sent her: “It dates from the happy working period of the years 1931 and 1932—to which I now have once again fully achieved the more mature connection.”<sup>18</sup> There is a suggestion that the intervening years had not been so happy. By then he had come to think of the time of his rectorate as a misguided interruption of his philosophical work. The conclusion of the greatly expanded final version, the text of three lectures Heidegger gave at the Freie Deutsche Hochstift in Frankfurt am Main in November and December 1936, returns to the Hölderlin quote. The significance of that back and forth, from Hölderlin to Hegel and back to Hölderlin,

will demand further consideration. What is important here is that the Epilogue should not be considered something just added on to the essay, after it had been completed. From the very beginning Heidegger was formulating his thoughts in part as a response to Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*.

Heidegger recognizes how difficult, but also how important it is to challenge Hegel's proclamation of the end of art in what once was its highest sense:

In the most comprehensive reflection on the nature of art that the West possesses—comprehensive because it stems from metaphysics—namely Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, the following propositions occur:

Art no longer counts for us as the highest manner in which truth may obtain existence for itself.

One may well hope that art will continue to advance and perfect itself, but its form has ceased to be the highest need of the spirit.

In all these relationships art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation something past.

The judgment that Hegel passes in these statements cannot be evaded by pointing out that since Hegel's lectures in aesthetics were given for the last time during the winter of 1828–29 at the University of Berlin, we have seen the rise of many new art works and new art movements. Hegel never meant to deny this possibility. But the question remains: is art still an essential and necessary way in which that truth happens which is decisive for our historical existence, or is art no longer of this character? If, however, it is such no longer, then there remains the question why this is so. The truth of Hegel's judgment has not yet been decided; for behind this verdict there stands Western thought since the Greeks, which thought corresponds to a truth of beings that has already happened. Decision upon the judgment will be made, when it is made, from and about the truth of what is. Until then the judgment remains in force. But for that very reason, the question is necessary whether the truth that the judgment declares is final and conclusive and what follows if it is (G5, 68/79–80).

Heidegger's ambivalence concerning the finality of Hegel's judgment is shown once more, when in a later conversation (1959) with Petzet he affirms it, only to immediately call such affirmation into question by adding, "that even that would have to be shown."<sup>19</sup>

Our confrontation with Heidegger's thinking on art becomes thus inevitably also a confrontation with Hegel. The truth of Hegel's judgment, Heidegger insists, has not yet been decided, even as it is said to be supported by Western thought since the Greeks. We should note that the appeal here is to thought, not to art. To Hegel's reflections on the progress of spirit, which has left art behind, Heidegger opposes his own reflections on art:

Such questions, which solicit us more or less definitely, can be asked only after we have first taken into consideration the nature of art. We attempt



to take a few steps by posing the question of the origin of the art work. The problem is to bring to view the work-character of the work. What the word “origin” here means is thought by way of the nature of truth (G5, 69/80).

Heidegger is well aware that Hegel’s pronouncement that art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation something past, never meant to deny that there would be many new works of art and future art movements. “But the question remains: is art still an essential and necessary way in which that truth happens which is decisive for our historical existence, or is art no longer of this character? If, however, it is such no longer, then there remains the question why this is so” (G5, 68/80). This suggests that we need to distinguish between two kinds of art: between art in which the truth happens that is decisive for human beings—Heidegger speaks of “great art”—and art that lacks such significance. That we moderns have difficulty with the first seems evident.

How then did Hegel understand the art that he claimed had come to an end? Apparently not as aesthetics, as defined above, would understand it. Hegel, as Heidegger suggests, understands art “on the side of its highest vocation” as the happening of truth. Just this the aesthetic approach refuses to do. It divorces beauty and truth. And this divorce, Heidegger claims, following Hegel, is a consequence of a development of thought that has shaped the world we live in today. The shape of modernity supports Hegel’s proclamation of the end of art in its highest sense.

But will his be the last word on the future of art? “Decision upon the judgment will be made, when it is made, from and about the truth of what is. Until then the judgment remains in force” (G5, 68/80). Crucial then is “the truth of what is.”

### 3. The Aesthetic Approach

Before returning to Hegel, it is necessary to take a second and closer look at what has been called the aesthetic approach. This approach and the rise of philosophical aesthetics belong together. I already pointed out that we owe the word “aesthetics” to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. But to give a bit more definition to what I mean by “aesthetic” let me turn here to a passage from Kant’s “First Introduction” to the *Critique of Judgment*, where Kant distinguishes two rather different meanings of “aesthetic.” “Aesthetic” indicates for one what has to do with sensibility. The aesthetic is understood here as belonging to the object (phenomenon). Think of the green of the grass, the smell of the rose. These are its aesthetic qualities. From this meaning of “aesthetic” we have to distinguish a second, where by means of the aesthetic mode of representation the represented is not related to the *faculty of knowledge*, but to the *feeling of pleasure and displeasure*:<sup>20</sup> I call the green

of the grass soothing, the smell of the rose delightful. Here the aesthetic is understood as belonging first of all to the subject.

It is this second sense that is presupposed by the aesthetic approach. Aesthetic judgment so understood involves a reflective movement. “Reflective” here suggests a looking back from the object to the kind of experience it elicits. The philosophy of art understood as aesthetics thus has its foundation in a more subjective approach to art that tends to reduce the work of art to an occasion for a certain kind of enjoyable experience. What is enjoyed is not so much the work of art, as the occasioned experience or state of mind. Aesthetic enjoyment is fundamentally self-enjoyment.

As the distinction between the pleasure we take in a good meal and the satisfaction we take in a beautiful picture suggests, the second sense of “aesthetic” invites a further distinction, between a broader sense that includes the merely pleasant and the beautiful, and a narrower sense, that now distinguishes properly aesthetic judgments from judgments about what makes, say, food or some caress delightful. This is how Kant came to use the term in the *Critique of Judgment*; and this is the meaning that has come to be taken for granted by aesthetics. As the distinction between the beautiful, the sublime—and we can add such other aesthetic categories as the interesting or the characteristic—suggests, not every aesthetic judgment so understood need be a judgment of beauty. To these different aesthetic categories correspond different kinds of aesthetic experience.

#### 4. Art and Truth

It is evident that on the aesthetic approach as here defined truth and art belong to different provinces. Works of art should be enjoyable. Whether the judged works are true or false does not matter. The substance of the claim “the proof of the pudding is in the eating” holds here, too. With this art becomes a form of perhaps high class entertainment. Often art is indeed no more. As Hegel observed:

Beauty and art, no doubt, pervade the business of life like a kindly genius, and form the bright adornment of all our surroundings, both mental and material, soothing the sadness of our condition and the embarrassment of real life, killing time in entertaining fashion, and where there is nothing good to be achieved, occupying the place of what is vicious, better at any rate, than vice. Yet although art presses in with its pleasing shapes on every possible occasion, from the rude adornments of the savage to the splendor of the temple with its untold wealth of decoration, still these shapes themselves appear to fall outside the real purposes of life. And even if the creations of art do not prove detrimental to our graver purposes, if they appear at times actually to further them by keeping evil at a distance, still it is so far true that art belongs rather to the relaxation

and leisure of the mind, while the substantive interests of life demand its exertion.<sup>21</sup>

Is art more than entertainment? And if just entertainment, is it worthy of the philosopher's attention? We can of course use art to express or dress up moral and other important ideas, use it to edify, as too much art today attempts to do, but in that case is it not at bottom superfluous? Like Heidegger, Hegel, too, demands more of great art. He is well aware that in the past, say in ancient Greece or in the Middle Ages, art has been much more than just entertainment and that it is precisely this that makes it worthy of the philosopher's attention.

Fine art is not real art till it is in this sense free, and only achieves its highest task when it has taken its place in the same sphere with religion and philosophy, and has become simply a mode of revealing to consciousness and bringing to utterance the Divine Nature, the deepest interests of humanity, and the most comprehensive truths of the mind. It is in works of art that nations have deposited the profoundest intuitions and ideas of their hearts; and fine art is frequently the key—with many nations there is no other—to the understanding of their wisdom and of their religion.<sup>22</sup>

Hegel places art in a common circle with philosophy and religion. In it the profoundest interests of human beings find expression. Following Aristotle, Hegel thus goes on to argue that art is more philosophical than a mere description of phenomena as they present themselves could ever be.

Art liberates the real import of appearances from this bad and fleeting world, and imparts to phenomenal semblances a higher reality, born of mind. The appearances of art therefore, far from being mere semblances, have the higher reality and the more genuine existence in comparison with the realities of common life.<sup>23</sup>

But by tying art in this way to reality and truth, Hegel is forced to subordinate art to religion, philosophy, and science.<sup>24</sup> Have we not come to recognize the medium of thought as more adequate to the pursuit of truth than the medium of art? Does our modern world not presuppose that recognition? The argument rests on the following three considerations:

1. Art is tied to truth.
2. The adequate expression of truth can only be thought, which communicates itself in ideally clear and distinct propositions.
3. Art is essentially sensuous.

But if we accept 3, it follows that art is inadequate, measured by what the pursuit of truth demands. Like Kant, we are likely to suspect that those,

who today still dedicate their whole life to art and expect to find there what is necessary to a fulfilled life, are missing out on what matters most.

However all this may be, it certainly is the case that art no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual wants, which earlier epochs and peoples have sought therein only; a satisfaction which, at all events on the religious side, was most intimately and profoundly connected with art. The beautiful days of Greek art, and the golden time of the later middle ages, are gone by. The reflective culture of our life of today, makes it a necessity for us, in respect to our will no less than of our judgment, to adhere to general points of view, and to regulate particular matters according to them, so that general forms, laws, duties, rights, maxims are what have validity as grounds of determination and are the chief regulative force.<sup>25</sup>

Here I would like to add the footnote that Renaissance and Reformation witnessed not only the beginnings of a new aesthetic art, but also a return of iconoclastic tendencies. The marriage of art and religion is now beginning to come apart: as religion becomes ever more insistent that the spiritual truth of the Christian faith is debased by art, art becomes autonomous, pursued now only for art's sake.

There is still a trace of that iconoclastic spirit in Hegel. Consider the following passage:

Of such a kind is the Christian conception of truth; and more especially the spirit of our modern world, or, to come closer, of our religion and our intellectual culture, reveals itself as beyond the stage at which art is the highest mode assumed by man's consciousness of the absolute. The peculiar mode to which artistic production and works of art belong no longer satisfies our supreme need. We are above the level at which works of art can be venerated as divine, and actually worshipped; the impression which they make is of a more considerate kind, and the feelings which they stir within us require a higher test and a further confirmation. Thought and reflection have taken their flight above fine art.<sup>26</sup>

The progress of truth has left art behind. Only ages that had not yet awoken to the requirements of truth could find in art a satisfaction denied to us.

The thesis that art has lost its highest significance for us moderns is stated even more strongly a bit later:

... the whole spiritual culture of the age is of such a kind that he [the artist] himself stands within this reflective world and its conditions, and it is impossible for him to abstract from it by will and resolve, or to contrive