



Aesthetics and the Foundation of Interpretation

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Aesthetics and the Foundation of Interpretation

I.

IN A FAMOUS PROPOSITION which reflected a history, a science, a metaphysics, and a performative which did not question themselves, Hegel in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* declared:

Lacking strength, Beauty hates the Understanding for asking of her what it cannot do.¹

It was the axiom for what Martin Heidegger would still call a century later “the most comprehensive reflection on the nature of art that the West possesses—comprehensive because it stems from metaphysics.”² Moreover, Heidegger himself epilogues his own text, “On the Origin of the Work of Art,” in turn one of the most famous in twentieth century aesthetics, by citing three more propositions from Hegel concerning the decline of art:

Art no longer counts for us as the highest manner in which truth obtains 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.³

While Heidegger declared that the “truth” of Hegel’s propositions on art still remained to be decided, he himself in fact at one point, in any case, seemingly decided *against* “modern art,” declaring in a posthumously published interview in *Der Spiegel*, that “we are left in the dark as to how modern art perceives or tries to perceive what is most proper to art (*das Eigenste der Kunst*).”⁴

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What is it that art lacks, by which it stands now in a state of decline? Beauty is without force, “lacking in strength,” and more specifically with regard to Hegel, lacking “the energy of thought,” the “tremendous power of the negative.” Beauty lacks reality. It lacks, that is, “realization,” that which was for Hegel, with a certain outlook on pragmatics, “the magical power that converts (thought) into being.” Art proceeds unaware that truth can be won “only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself.”⁵ Beauty, in short, lacks a *proof*; it remains merely fanciful before this need for proof. Before reason’s critical tribunal, art, on the contrary, will always remain “a priori helpless (*hilflos*),” as Adorno put it, thinking nonetheless that it was precisely its virtue⁶

II.

If Hegel’s assertion can be seen to culminate a certain metaphysical position on the work of art, it arises nonetheless only at a particular point within its history. The proof in question already commits itself to a certain transcendentalism as well as a strict commitment regarding the demonstrability of the rational. Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is the enclave to a systematic science which barred the possibility of any epistemic content falling beyond its boundaries. And it involved a ban which was perhaps unthinkable prior to the rise of modernism and a commitment limiting rationality to strict demonstrability and rational proof—rather than, for example, a *theoria* and a *telos* which ultimately came to rest in *contemplatio*. There is perhaps no greater symptom of this modernism and the shattering it portends than Kant’s critical system.⁷ Kant’s third *Critique* showed metaphysics in fact in ruins, underwritten by an epistemic commitment to *mathesis* and its modern off-spring, the *principiae* of scientific ide-

alization, while at the same time retaining a “provocation” before the work of art—an event which, while sensible and nonconceptual, provokes thoughts (*denken veranlasst*) into reflection, into play, “without however any determinate (*bestimmter*) thought, i.e. any *concept* being capable of being adequate to it.”⁸ The underdetermination in question and the *inadequation* which ensued barred any simple rules of correspondence for translating the work of art into thought or words. Unlike logical attributes which simply represent what lies in the conceptual, “aesthetical attributes,” as Kant calls them, “arouse more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words.”⁹ They “enliven (*belebe*) the mind by opening it out [literally providing an *Aus-sicht*] to an illimitable field.”¹⁰ Rather than a field of thought based upon representation, on *Darstellung*, on what can be encompassed within the unity of a concept, and consequently on the *homiosis* between concept and object, the underdetermination here forces thought to have recourse to imagination. Beyond the simple forms of univocal discourse, it enforces, that is, a certain *ex-stasis* upon thought. Rather than facilitating a simple substitution between thought and concept, the work of art enforces the deferral of representation within reflection. And it involved an event provocative enough that Kant could find no better words for the description of its *Aussicht* than to appeal for its characterization to the metaphysical past. The third *Critique* characterizes the encounter with the work of art precisely as “purely contemplative” (*blöss kontemplative*).¹¹

Still, Kant could say no more. Notwithstanding the metaphysical appeals of his “post-Analytic” considerations, he was incapable of going beyond an almost nostalgic attribution. The *Aussicht* could not seemingly be made rational. In fact, Kant, in the end removed all rational overtones from this “contemplation.” If it remained the case that the experience of the work of art is not restricted to a faculty or to taste, but is ascribed to the thing, its *ascription* would only be at best subjunctive. The man who perceives the beautiful “speaks of beauty *as if* it were a property of things.”¹² Consequently, Kant would place the experience within the dialectical regulation of the *als ob* and thus, within the sphere of transcendental

illusion. Notwithstanding all that the *Aussicht* of the aesthetic had opened up, Kant’s last word with regard to it remained determined and decisive:

“The judgement of taste is not cognitive” (*Das Geschmacksurteil ist kein Erkenntnisurteil*).¹³

And, all thought based upon *Erkenntnistheorie* would thereafter make the same assignation, barring the work of art from its domain and substituting the investigation of its subjective experience for the work itself.

III.

Hegel’s Preface to the *Phenomenology* without question shares Kant’s ban regarding this excess. It was in fact subtitled, “On Scientific Cognition.” And if it were true that on other matters Hegel saw himself disagree *toto caelo* with Kant, when it came to art, in fact, Hegel’s *Asthetik* had at least the same effect, treading upon similar commitments regarding the rational and the ensuing ban concerning the work of art. What was the Hegelian system, after all, if not the system of systems, the attempt once and for all to provide the form and content of an absolutely presuppositionless system, providing even the foundation of science with its own immanence?¹⁴

And yet, one might be tempted equally to claim that what Hegel seeks to finish off only concerns an *arche* much more ancient, an *exclusion* of the work of art that is active as early, perhaps paradigmatically, in the Platonic text. In the *Republic* Plato himself already described the *agon* between poetry and philosophy as ancient or archaic.¹⁵ And, while the *Ion*, on the other hand, reinstates the poet to an elevated position, granting him or her a kind of insight into the divine, it is an inspiration which is totally irrational, an inspiration through which the poet is not in his right mind, “out of his senses and the mind is no longer in him.”¹⁶ And since the poet utters his incantations not by rules of art, the *techne* involved is simply magical, sophisticated, in fact, betraying a content totally exceptional to the rationality of the *polis*. If Plato grants the poet an exceptional grace, as the interpreter of the gods, in fact it is only in a way that *defuses* his or her gift—a gift that stands outside the art of dialectics, beyond

episteme, an art capable of saying anything and defending nothing.

The specific target of Hegel's condemnation, nonetheless, is Friederich Schelling, a voice which for the most part remains silent, overshadowed within the history (and perhaps the metaphysics) of aesthetics. Still, if it is true, as Heidegger claimed, that Hegel presents the *apotheosis* of metaphysics and its work of art, its most comprehensive reflection, a speculative optics which claimed "(p)ure self-recognition in absolute otherness,"¹⁷ then Schelling, however briefly as will be seen, presents its utter provocation, an *Augenblick* which itself remains irrecoverable.¹⁸ And, this remains true even for the Heideggerean text itself perhaps. While Heidegger was quick to place Schelling's later philosophy within the *Geschick* of metaphysics and to decree the latter's claim that Will is primordial being, the bell-wether of the nineteenth century, he remained remarkably silent on Schelling's aesthetics—both in relation to the history of metaphysics as well as its overcoming (*Überwindung*).

In a letter to his then friend Hegel, written in 1795, Schelling wrote:

(P)hilosophy is not yet at an end. Kant provided the results. The premises are still missing.¹⁹

Nonetheless, if there were a certain agreement regarding what was to be concluded, the nature of the premises and the meaning of their implication would in the end bring about an ultimate *agon* between the two philosophers concerning the beautiful, and more generally, the relation between *Anschauung* and *Erkennen*. In fact Kant had bequeathed his progeny the problem of what he calls in the third Critique an "immeasurable gulf" (*unübersehbare Kluft*)²⁰ between the sensible and the intelligible, one which had generated philosophical antinomies in the attempt to account for the origins of experience, the relation between freedom and necessity, and hence the nature of morality and metaphysics in general. The rift between the litigants of these antinomies was in fact immeasurable, incommensurable, and consequently undecidable on theoretical grounds. The decision was made then to allow each its own domain, granting the realm of the practical a certain priority in rational *recherche*, so long as

it did not trespass its limit.

Still, Kant searched for a bridge, if for no other reason, as he stated in the Introduction to the third *Critique*, than the domain to which he had granted privilege "demanded" it: "The concept of freedom is meant to actualize (*wirklich machen*) in the world of sense the purpose proposed by its laws."²¹ "There must then," Kant hypothesized,

be a ground of the unity of the supersensible, which lies at the basis of nature . . . (A)nd the concept of this ground, although it does not attain either theoretically or practically to a knowledge (*Erkenntnisse*) of the same and hence has no peculiar realm (*kein eigentümlichen Gebiet*), nevertheless makes possible the transition from one mode of thought according to the principles of the one to that according to the principles of the other.²²

Hegel denied that such a paradox concerning this ground lurked for science. He was in fact absolutely convinced that Kant had implicitly solved his own problem, artificially setting up limits and then surreptitiously surpassing them in discovering the Absolute. The solution was already posed in the problem. The fact that the concept of freedom is meant to actualize the purpose its law proposes in the world of the sensible, in the strictest of Kantian senses that it proposes to *realize* its purpose, meant that the proof of its reality would be precisely in making *aufgehoben* the opposition—and in recognizing *only* itself in absolute otherness.²³

The problem of the work of art, the problem with "beauty," its weakness, as Hegel put it, is precisely its inability to transform itself before reality, precisely the helplessness by which it remains bound to a "foreign" content. In fact, the work of art has no laws and no concepts to realize. And, were it in fact to recognize itself in its other, were strict correspondence to arise before its object, it would precisely no longer *be* art, but simple representation, i.e., *Darstellung*. In the strict sense of the word there are no signs in art. Art merely occasions or provokes—rather than translates—the language of thought into an expressive stratum: it figures, "symbolizes," rather than actualizes thought, if that too did not presuppose a concept to be figured, both of which the work of art lacks. And, that is for Hegel precisely its weakness. It is anything but coincidental, as shall become

evident, that Schelling's last letter to Hegel (November, 1807) containing a terse reply to the *Phenomenology's* Preface, would have misgivings about Hegel's misuse of his notion of Idea, in particular invoking with regard to it a false opposition between "concept" and intuition.²⁴

IV.

Schelling's own *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), nonetheless, coheres at first glance with the *Erkenntnislehre* that Kant bequeathed. It was a transcendental system, a science of knowledge²⁵ which claimed a certain closure—a definitive completeness and determinateness, to invoke the Kantian predicates. And yet the opening sentence of the Foreword testified equally that it would be "a system which completely alters and even overthrows the whole view of things prevailing" (1), one which would in fact, from the prevailing standpoint, provide "monstrous consequences" despite what he called "the rigorous demonstration of its principles." No less a figure than Schiller would concur: in the final chapter of the work, he declared, Schelling's conclusions concerning the status of the work of art destroyed transcendental philosophy and its commitment regarding a reflective ground.²⁶

The outcome of the treatise attempted a *demonstration* of the unity of the elements of knowledge, a *monstre* concerning the unity of the subjective and the objective, consciousness and nature—a proof of how, as Schelling put it, "the purely presentative" and "what can be presented" (5), consciousness and the unconsciousness, can find unity. Moreover, in so doing, the unity of the theoretical and the practical would be established, the unity of consciousness's prescription of the laws governing its own actions as well as the laws governing phenomena. That is, such a unity would provide a legitimation for the domain which had been opened up by the third *Critique* and yet could not be raised to the level of knowledge.

The 1800 *System*, however, bars Hegel's solution for speculative metaphysics. Rather than providing a demonstration of the unity of subject and object, practical reason abolishes the object. "In the free act the identity of the two activities (objective factor and the subjec-

tive factor) must be annulled precisely in order that the act may thereby appear as free" (220). Schelling thus bars the voluntarist solution which would in Michel Foucault's term result in a certain "theologization" of man in the nineteenth century.²⁷ The abolition of the other here remains, Schelling claims, in an argument anticipating Marx's critique of Hegel, one in which the requisite identity was such that "the intelligence was conscious only for inner intuition, but for outer remained unconscious" (218). But, equally that means that the unity cannot be simply demonstrated in thought alone. "It is utterly impossible for anything objective to be brought forth with consciousness" (219). From the standpoint of the theoretical, "man is forever a broken fragment" (216). Hence it would be necessary to surpass the reflective ground of transcendental philosophy. Schelling in this regard in fact agreed with Kant; the ground of the unity between subject and object remains inaccessible to thought alone. The finite *Rücksfrage* cannot provide its own origins. Subjectivity cannot itself be the agency of objectivity. Rather, if the unity between the subject and the object is to appear, it must *appear* in the object. *Qua appearance*, then:

An intuition must therefore be exhibitable in the intelligence itself, whereby in one and the same appearance the self is at once conscious and unconscious for itself, and it is by means of such an intuition that we first bring forth the intelligence, as it were, entirely out of itself (217-218).

The product of such a bringing-forth, such a *poiesis*, will share, therefore, both the characteristics of the products of freedom (in that it appears before consciousness as its own) and the products of nature, which are unconsciously brought about—every organism, Schelling claims, is a "monogram" of the identity in question but not as self-recognized. It remains one whose identity lies beyond it, that is dirempted before the gaze of an external judgment, i.e., reflection. The exhibition of this unity would then be precisely the underlying ground, the absolute for the two moments in question:

This unknown, however, whereby the objective and conscious activities are here brought into unexpected

harmony, is none other than that absolute which contains the common ground of the preestablished harmony between the conscious and the unconscious. Hence, if this absolute is reflected from out of the product, it will appear to the intelligence as something lying above the latter, and which, in contrast to freedom, brings an element of the unintended to that which was begun with consciousness and intention (221-222).

The product, reflecting the absolute from within itself, would arise precisely in completing the "meting-out" intimated in the Introduction to Kant's first *Critique*:

There are two stems of human knowledge, namely sensibility and understanding, which perhaps spring from a common but to us unknown root.²⁸

The common root here, the faculty of synthesis, the generation of transcendental Ideas,²⁹ would be similarly referred to by Hegel as "the faculty of speculation."³⁰ Its product, the work of art, Schelling claimed, "radiates back" (*widerstrahlt* [222]) the inner unity of the two stems, accomplishing what no simple inner intuition can provide and thus elevating thought (Kant's *Erleben*), "appearing to the intelligence as something lying above the latter": the unity of consciousness and unconscious, freedom and necessity, the inner and the outer, the principles of theoretical and practical reason.

It is precisely this "exhibited" identity, which no willing could provide, that is the "miracle" (*Wunder*) of the work of art, as Schelling calls it. And the analysis of the artist, he believes, itself confirms what the work of art reveals. The testimony of artists, he claims, is that they are involuntarily driven to create their works, satisfying an irresistible urge, in a manner that "free activity becomes involuntary"—proceeding, then, from a contradiction, "one which strikes *at the ultimate in him*, the root of his whole being" (222). Equally, as it strikes at his relation to the ultimate, so too, it ends "in the feeling of an infinite harmony" (223), a harmony that is involuntarily produced in accord with "things which he does not fully understand and whose meaning is infinite." It involves, Schelling states in a fundamental repetition of Plato, a power which separates him from all other men, an intuition or inspiration which reveals the absolute. And when Schelling discusses what he calls the "obscure

concept of genius" (222), it is in accord with Kant's notion of *intellectus archetypus*:³¹ Genius derives from neither of the two stems by which it is composed but rather "presides over both" in the generation of the Absolute. It involved then a phenomenon which, like Kant's moral law, was in itself absolutely compelling, fixed of itself alone, *für sich selbst feste*, as the latter put it.³² For Schelling, the work of art is a phenomenon which is equally fully "convincing," the predicates having changed from the moral to the epistemic sphere:

(E)very absolute concurrence of the two antithetical activities is utterly unaccountable (*nicht weiter erklärbar*), being simply a phenomenon which although incomprehensible (*unbegreiflich*) yet cannot be denied; and art, therefore, is the one everlasting revelation (*Offenbarung*) which yields that concurrence and the marvel (*Wunder*) which had it existed but once only, would necessarily have convinced us of the absolute reality of that supreme event (223).

It marked an event involving thought's most extreme *ex-stasis*, invoking a recognition that must occur beyond concepts, the failure of the concept's grasp, *unbegreiflich*, a provocation which discloses its essence in a singular event, a universal-singular deferring the universality of the concept. It was the production, the *poiesis* of a *Wunder* before which intelligence would "feel itself surprised and blessed" (*überracht und beglückt* [221]).

And yet, as such it traced the destruction of transcendentalism. If the work of art is a revelation, it is so precisely by what transcends any and all transcendental categories, precisely because of its nonimmanence and withdrawal before the concept and transcendental representation. On the contrary, it was, Schelling claimed, the presentation of what remained unrepresentable within the transcendental text, delivering consciousness over to its unconscious and "set[ing] all the forces of the mind in motion in order to resolve a contradiction which threatens our whole intellectual existence" (226). Rather, art delivered reflection over to a provocation which was the revelation of all that escaped transcendentalism, overcoming the metaphysical *agon* which had stood at its origin. This was for Schelling the significance of the work of art's *Über-raschung*.³³ Art no longer then could be seen as the madness of the

gods, an excess before thought which could be defused within the philosopher's text. It was now in fact, Schelling claimed, its culmination, a *Faktum der Vernunft* which was the *sine qua non* of knowledge itself: art alone succeeds in achieving absolute objectivity and "universal validity (*Gültigkeit* [232])." An inversion of the metaphysician's understanding of the relation between the philosopher and the poet thus ensues:

Philosophy as philosophy can never become generally current. The one field to which absolute objectivity is granted is art. Take away objectivity from art, one might say, and it ceases to be what it is, and becomes philosophy; grant objectivity to philosophy, and it ceases to be philosophy and becomes art (233).

The philosopher presents in subjective intuition what the artist reveals objectively, not simply a seeing, or a sign, or an intuition of the identity between the subjective and the objective, a symbol but as their *sympallein*, their concurrence. The work of art then is precisely a symbol, but now a *symbolon* that is concrete, a "bringing-together," a *Zusammenbringen* as he would say in the *Philosophie der Kunst*,³⁴ treading more literally on its etymological past, one which, far from being the poverty of the subjective, is precisely its ground of identity, its concretization. Hence, the work of art's infinite repose is the overcoming of the infinite "waver- ing between finite and infinite," an "unchanging identity which can never attain to consciousness" and which is precisely in its enlivening and uplifting "a dark unknown force which supplies the element of completeness or objectivity to the piecework of freedom," and as such carrying the appearance of "calm and silent grandeur" (225).

Far from being the poverty of thought as Kant (and Hegel after him) claimed, the symbol is its fulfillment. And far from being the mark of its incompleteness, the symbol is the surpassing of all that remains subjective within the sign, within representation. And, far from being its overcoming, the philosopher's text, the text of representation, finds its destiny (222) in what could never attain to thought within the sign. Schelling's 1800 *System* then culminates precisely in handing science over to art, setting up an opposition which no theory can overcome:

So far as particularly concerns the relation of art to science, the two are so utterly opposed in tendency, that if science were ever to have discharged its whole task, as art has always discharged it, they would both have to coincide and merge into one—which is proof of directions that they are radically opposed (227).

As has become evident, then, having claimed that the "poetic gift . . . constitutes the primordial intuition" (230), Schelling decisively demotes the text of the philosopher.

For though science at its highest level has one and the same business as art, this business, owing to the manner of effecting it, is an endless one for science, so that one may say that art constitutes the ideal of science, and where art is, science has yet to attain to (227).³⁵

V.

The text's position was inevitably, archetypically perhaps, the inverse of Platonism. And, perhaps Schelling knew it. If it remained the masterpiece of his philosophy, it culminated in a position which its author would begin to abandon almost as hastily as he adjoined it to the book as the concluding chapter. It was after all, to turn Nietzschean, "image mad" or at least "thought-mad," proceeding, "not merely by logical inference,"³⁶ but "with the immediate certainty of intuition,"³⁷ as the latter began *The Birth of Tragedy*, that book which was intentionally anti-Platonist, transforming all texts into shining images.

And, within two years the problem of metaphysical extravagance, the problem of the text's anti-Platonist, had apparently struck home. Schelling, in any case, had backed-off the position. In *On University Studies* he first attempted to defuse the conflict claiming that history had itself overcome the dichotomy between philosophy, the discourse of truth, and poetry, the discourse of *extasis*. Christian religion, he claimed, has created its own poetry and art and "thereby it has become possible to formulate a complete objective theory of art."³⁸ Plato unfortunately, Schelling states, was unaware of a critical difference in poetry and its works. "Christian poetry . . . expresses the infinite as unmistakably as ancient poetry expressed the finite."³⁹ Plato's mistake then was *not* in elevating the text of philosophy against poetry, but in not anticipating the evolution and

perfection of poetry itself. Nonetheless, such a *reflection* presupposed a theoretical position from which objective *poiesis* could be adjudicated. That is, it presupposed an objective and reflective theoretical-critical standpoint. It presupposed the priority of the representation over its content, the privilege of theory. And it is just this ancient privilege which is reinvoked in Schelling's *Kehre*. Retaining for art the privilege of the real, he nonetheless grants to philosophy *identity* and ideality. Still attempting to retain his earlier formulation, he grants the ideal now to philosophy:

Art although entirely absolute, although the real and the ideal are perfectly united in it, is to philosophy what the real is to the ideal. In philosophy the opposition between the two is ultimately resolved in pure identity; nonetheless philosophy is ideal in relation to art. The two meet at the summit, and because both are absolute, each can be the archetype of the other. That is why philosophy enables us to gain the deepest insights into art. . . .⁴⁰

The identity then falls to the philosopher who is no longer overtaken by the revelation of the work of art but finds his identity instead confirmed. Subjective "reflection" is not a reflection, a limit. The artist remains unconscious in relation to the work of art, i.e., the identity of his product remains external, "reflected outside" it in the philosopher's text.

(P)hilosophy, for all its inner identity with art, remains always and necessarily science—ideal—while art remains always and necessarily art—i.e., real.⁴¹

Thus, the notion of art as the ideal and inner identity of consciousness has been left behind. The artist will no longer provide "the eternal organ and document of philosophy" (231) before which the conceptual grasp of consciousness would always appear as inadequate, simply subjective. Rather, the destiny of this identity is now to be found precisely in the judgement of the text of philosophy. The *Bruno* in fact barred the artist from access to the absolute.

(S)ince the creative artist does not recognize the divine he will necessarily look like one who defiles the mysteries, not their initiate and devotee.⁴²

It was in a sense just what Pareyson called "I

problemi del Bruno"⁴³—and there was a sense in which Schelling never returned from it.

VI.

What was it that caused the inversion within Schelling's position and its ensuing setting into decline of art? Schelling scholars, as Tilliette has noted, have argued variously here, for the most part without conclusive results.⁴⁴ There are reasons enough perhaps why it could have been abandoned. One thing is certain, however. The position, Schelling's *monstre*, was from the outset untenable. Whether or not he saw it that way, whether or not he moved on to problems of greater interest to him, the wavering of the writings initially following the 1800 *System* recoil from its *ex-stasis*.

In a sense Hegel had been right about Schelling's position in the end. The claim concerning "the ecstasy of thought in which knowledge is the immediate knowledge of the absolute"⁴⁵ remained incompatible with Schelling's *demonstration*, the fact that, as Hegel saw too, "Schelling often uses Spinoza's form of procedure, and sets up axioms."⁴⁶ As if this *Faktum der Vernunft* could be axiomatically "mediated," when it was precisely the revelation of an incommensurable, "an oracle to which we have to give way," as Hegel described it.⁴⁷ The work of art, in the strict sense *unbegreiflich*, has no judgement behind it, no proposition to manifest, no premises, and strictly speaking, no entailment. In the strict sense, the sense, that is, in which both Hegel and Kant agreed about art, "the *proving* of anything is thus abandoned."⁴⁸ Schelling's revelation stood beyond all strict proof, heuristic with regard to its truth, beyond, then, all strict demonstrability. Hence Schelling's *Wissen der Wissen* had no firm grounds on which to stand. The work of art could not solve the problem of *Wissenschaftslehre*. The aesthetic act could not provide "the unity of the true and the good,"⁴⁹ that had been sought as early as 1796. What was revealed instead, as has been seen, was something quite different, a "phenomenon" that was "utterly unaccountable, being a phenomenon which although incomprehensible, yet could not be denied" (233). And Schelling himself never perhaps quite came to grips with it.

In the "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism" written five years before the

1800 *System*, he had likewise said that the work of art opened up “a quiet abandonment to the Immeasurable (*Unermessliche*).”⁵⁰ And yet it was not without the recognition of a certain contingency and its risk. Incommensurable with any final concept or description, if it was not a phenomenon which could escape the possibility of what later phenomenologists would call *phänomenologische Streit*. And Hegel saw it too: “. . . if this appears false (*falsch erscheint*) to you nothing further can be said. . . .”⁵¹ The proof in question would then fail, committed as it was from the outset to a strict conception of demonstrability, its *exstasis* before the requirements of this *episteme*, would inevitably derive by a certain *hubris*. Its claim succumbed in fact to a certain “dogmatism,” as he said in the earlier writing, a text which provoked perhaps an ironical return upon its author:

(D)ogmatism, if consistent, is bent not upon contest but surrender, not upon enforced but voluntary annihilation, upon quiet abandonment of oneself to the absolute object. Any thought of resistance and of contentious self-assertion that has found its way into dogmatism comes from a system better than dogmatism. However, in consistent dogmatism, that surrender has a purely aesthetic side (*eine reinästhetische Seite*).⁵²

Still, in the 1795 text Schelling had in a sense seen both the limitations as well as the accomplishments of such a position. Here “there seemed to be no danger that criticism would demonstrate more than the indemonstrability of your system”⁵³—which is not to say either the falsity or the contradictory character of its assertion. And, if Schelling’s 1795 text quite rightly did not openly affirm such an aesthetic “dogmatism,” he was aware in any case that the problem of the position’s indemonstrability would neither simply bar the event’s “clarity,” its “provocation,” nor its status as a *factum*, one, that was, to speak Husserlian, “rationality motivated,” and one whose authentic status or “legitimacy,” consequently, could not be denied.⁵⁴ And that seemed sufficient for the evidence in question.

VII.

The wonder perhaps is how Schelling ever thought otherwise, how he came to hold that the phenomenon in question *evoked a proof* which was in the strict sense decisive. Having disconnected this “revelation” from science, from

conceptual adequacy, from objective certainty, from the hope of ever overcoming the “contradiction” between the finite and the infinite that confronts the imagination, what seems miraculous perhaps is that Schelling still believed that recourse to “science,” to conceptual adequacy, to objective certainty, could be had. What he had claimed instead of the phenomenon was that “the unexpected concurrence” (228) beyond all grounds showed that the “contradiction,” or better the incommensurability between the finite and the infinite, was “one that is not worth the trouble of resolving” (226). That is, the phenomenon was undeniable and yet not strictly demonstrable, not amenable to a demonstration which would, to speak Platonically, come through the *agon* of refutation unscathed.⁵⁵ It was the recognition that, as Husserl would say of the logic of the phenomenological in general, “*adequacy and apodicticity of evidence need not go hand in hand*.”⁵⁶ And if the evidence were “clear,” without ever being capable of being made “distinct” *simpliciter*, this did not entail that it could not undergo further “clarification,” articulation, or revision. What was entailed was only that no definite, final, univocal, or strict judgement—no determinate reflection, in the Kantian sense—could be provided for it.

The wavering Schelling recognized concerning products of imagination undermined his claims with respect to them. It opened up, consequently, a certain equivocation in the classical *dictum*, “*de gustibus non est disputandum*,” one which remained unthought in Schelling. *De facto*, *dispute* does in fact occur with respect to works of art. Decidability does not. Adequacy, univocal “distinctness,” is never reached. Perfect adequacy would require, the Cartesians had declared, an intuition. Kant agreed, but denied finite intellects such presentation, which is why he declared the exposition of concepts was at best probable. But the work of art’s *Aus-sicht* must be seen to open up *another* kind of *disputandum*, one which steps beyond a modernist’s account of rationality dependent upon strict demonstrability and unequivocal decidability.

Schelling could in a sense be unconcerned that the critical-objectivist program would condemn the experience in question to indemonstrability just because he realized some-

thing else was in question—an event which remained rational, if still in the strict sense undecidable. It was the realization that the criteria of decidability or of “resolution” did not overcome the nature of the evidence, did not bring reasoning to an end with respect to it, if it limited its “expoundability” to the “equivocal.” The *disputandum* in question was, rather, a matter regarding an *interpretandum*. And, the work of art’s *Aus-sicht* is the opening of, the necessity of, and what Heidegger would call the “strictness” of,⁵⁷ interpretation, an *Aus-legung*.⁵⁸ Schelling at least in one sense had concurred, introducing the theoretical problem of interpretation at the heart of the 1800 *System*, enframing a problem that would haunt the legacy of German Idealism thereafter:

So it is with every true work of art, in that every one of them is susceptible of infinite interpretation (*Auslegung*) as though it contained an infinity of purposes (*Absichten*), while yet one is never able to say whether this infinity has lain within the artist himself, or resides only in the work of art (225, translation altered).⁵⁹

VIII.

But equally the opening in question was one which classical “hermeneutics” had always overlooked, an opening where incommensurability, undecidability, and the conflict of interpretation were strictly speaking insurmountable, subject to a fundamental contingency. The *interpretandum* here invokes the failure of conceptual commensurability, its opening out onto an other, an *Aus-ein-ander-setzung*⁶⁰ which was in the strict sense (but only in the strict sense) incomprehensible. Interpretation always undetermined the object. Not only was it the case that “to understand is to understand differently,”⁶¹ but the *interpretandum* was itself differentiated, withdrawing from the grasp of the concept, opening out onto what, as Schelling put it, remained “unexpected,” the sundering of subsumption, an experience in which thought is “subjected” instead to what escapes it. Artistically it was the encounter with the sublime, a surpassing which was an *Überschreitung* from which no concept could find the requisite resolution of Schelling’s conclusion. The work of art, the *interpretandum*, far from providing the requisite homogeneity for a sci-

ence of knowledge, was rather thought’s utter provocation. It would always involve a heterogeneity which thought attempted but failed to subsume, to grasp. The *interpretandum* of necessity then left as many questions unanswered as those for which it provided evidence. And if it remained the case that it was to be granted a rationality and a justification which escaped the commitments of modernism and strict demonstrability, that is, if a “logic” of interpretation with respect to it must be vindicated, it is true as well that it invoked a margin which interpretation must respect, and in this regard a fundamental unintelligibility.⁶²

And, Hegel, as has become evident, could only deny it. As he claimed in the greater *Logic* regarding reflective judgement, “What is thus found only comes to be through being left behind.”⁶³ Positing and presupposing at the same time, the *Aus-legung* of reflective judgement gets lost in a play of indeterminacy, again a “relation to otherness,”⁶⁴ which could not contain its own ground and could not be strictly grounded. It could not on its own, therefore, access the Idea. And this was precisely the problem of the content it deciphered. The Symbolic Idea of art remains “undetermined,” an abstract universal; arbitrary, estranged, “neither completed, nor to be completed.”⁶⁵

In this final denunciation Hegel may well have finished off a long history that would subsume the work of art beneath an Idea, providing, thereby, both its determination and adjudication, the destiny of the articulation of beauty (*kalon*), of what is most radiant (*ekphrastic*) and its grace (*charis*), within the text of philosophy. If it can indeed be claimed that Hegel is in this regard the determination of its most, or perhaps last, metaphysical moment, Schelling’s “Idea,” on the contrary, however briefly, and for the most part unthought, was its *overdetermination*—certainly its spur, by a semantic density that always exceeded determination.

IX.

In one of those apocalyptic texts which defines the genre of his *écriture*, Walter Benjamin stated, “(T)he aesthetic of the painter, the poet, *en état de surprise*, of art as the reaction of one surprised, is enmeshed in a number of pernicious romantic prejudices.”⁶⁶ What remains

“pernicious” about Schelling’s own romanticism was the belief and the “proof” it constructed that the *Über-raschung* in question could be overcome, that the work *solved*, indeed concluded ratiocination. It was a belief which, once having recognized the limits of the concept, reinstated still a metaphysics of the work of art (perhaps metaphysics as such), seeing it once more simply as “the sensuous manifestation of the good,”⁶⁷ a *parousia* presenting now the *Uridentität* of subject and object. It was the certainty that this claim itself would not be overtaken by an insurmountable undecidability. And, as such, it involved, as has been seen, a claim by which Hegel, “insidiously perhaps, is close by,” as Michel Foucault put it, when “truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him.”⁶⁸ Schelling still believed, that is, that the *agon* of interpretation could be undone—if nothing else in the claim that his own *recit* concerning the work of art provided the literal sign, the *meta-recit* for all that had been claimed to be strictly indemonstrable, the incommensurable that withdrew from any subjective grasp. What was pernicious then in Schelling’s account was precisely the claim to have demonstrated that the proof regarding the incommensurable was not itself overtaken and held within that other incommensurability on which he depended—*inter alia* in preserving the withdrawal of the aesthetic from the concept of what he called “criticism.” And in this it involved a profound forgetfulness—that this incommensurable/incommensurability was as well the site of an undecidability, one about which Jacques Derrida has written, perhaps himself still too paralyzed by it, that “(t)he philosopher, the chronicler, the theoretician in general, and at the limit everyone in writing is . . . taken by surprise.”⁶⁹

Still, that such a *sur-prise* would not destroy ratiocination is as obvious as that it could not complete it. With regard to works of art, as has become evident, it is, on the contrary, precisely what *invokes* the necessity of ratiocination by a sort of wonder that is as archaic and as perhaps unanswerable as metaphysics itself.⁷⁰ But it forces the recognition, as well, that the work of art will never be fully adequated, will need, consequently, to enforce upon the concept a

certain respect for what escapes and a certain respect for the failure of the critical project to account for it. And it is perhaps just in this respect, as Adorno put it, that “(o)n and through the trajectory of rationality, mankind becomes aware through art of what rationality has erased from memory.”⁷¹ Equally, it should be noted, Adorno saw it too; “the artist has to be surprised by what he creates,” though he linked it to the experimentation of art of the 1930s.⁷² Nonetheless, it was for him (not without a certain repetition of Schelling’s metaphysics) the expression of a more fundamental fact about works of art: “They seek to translate the memory of shudder (*Schauer*), incommensurable as it was in prehistorical times, into such terms as can be understood by man.”⁷³

X.

Still, if the “incommensurability” of the work of art remains insurpassable, and if in the strict sense, as has been seen, art remains, consequently, undecidable and thus, “helpless,” the question of art’s decline, the charge of the modern’s nihilism, or its altern, the call for a return to classical origins, can receive no simple endorsement. Not because both answers fall before the limits of a critique underwritten by healthy skepticism. Rather, on the contrary, both answers in fact depend precisely upon critique, depend upon simple rules of correspondence and access to the keys for deciphering a code which does not exist. They must, that is, have already decided.

Schelling, in fact too, in a sense had decided, already committing himself to a certain “melancholy” enshrouding works of art, convinced that the true time of art’s flourishing, when its power was capable of informing a *mythos* that would provide a unity for cultural practices, was complete. Now, on the contrary, he claimed, “there is a breach (*Trennung*) seemingly beyond repair” (232). Even after the ecstatic proof of the 1800 *System*, it marked a final breach and failure within the text of art’s elevation. It was, after all, a text which remained a *Wissenschaft* claiming to adequately and objectively render the work of art’s incommensurability into concepts. And, this melancholy, too, perhaps marked the blinking recognition that art could not decide what could not be decided on other grounds. No more than

theory could decide the work of art's provocation, could the latter decide, could it *conclude* theory. No *Konsequenz-ästhetik* could itself be grounded. And it meant as well that the work of art would not remain in any unaltered sense, at least, intelligible by means of the classical *concept* of the beautiful. Its truth could neither be simply subsumed nor subsume.

In fact three years before the 1800 *System* Friedrich von Schlegel had already written, "The principle of contemporary art is not the beautiful, but the characteristic (*Charakteristische*), the interesting, and, the philosophical."⁷⁴ It was in a sense the decline, but certainly the logical entailment outlined by the failure of Schelling's *monstre* regarding the strict objectivity of the work of art: "take away objectivity from art and it ceases to be what it is, and becomes philosophy" (223). But it perhaps marked, equally, a failure within the concept of the beautiful itself. There is a sense in which the concept of the beautiful perhaps remained too ideo-logical, too assured, and to this extent, too metaphysical to simply capture the work of art. And, if a test of a theory's value is its predictive capacity, Schlegel's account gains explanatory force. The concept of the beautiful in fact increasingly disappeared from accounts of art, finding no univocal and ready application in the art of this century. If it remained true that those writing in the wake of its archive have provided still the best path for grasping the trace of an archaic lineage within the art of a Klee, a Chagall, a Schonberg, a Mies, a Rothko, or an Andre, their protocols have found no easy intelligibility in the modernist challenges of a Becket, a Bacon, a Cage, a Warhol, or a Beuys, for whom the *propre* of art has been directly placed in question, spurred by a moment over which the beautiful seemingly could no longer hold sway. It involved a moment in which, rather, as Adorno perhaps rightly put it, the radiance had become black,⁷⁵ and its artists, like Nietzsche's tortured Apollinian martyrs aware of disillusion remained terror-stricken, horrified by all that idealization had apparently excluded.⁷⁶

The difference between these figures, these two *topoi*, their dissonance, to reinvoke Adorno's musicological trope, is the *mise en abîme* of the modern itself, an indecision which bequeaths a certain tension to its heirs, a tension, moreover,

which would always verge on simply turning eclectic, of dissolving itself in the illusion which mistook the undecidable for the merely relative, disarming the force of art's voice, its summons, or *An-rede*, as Hegel blinkingly put it,⁷⁷ and perhaps thereby its truth. It involved, as has been seen, a truth for which modernism has always had a dearth of concepts, faced with the threat of an *exstasis* which was as ancient as the question of the truth of art, and the question of art's sacred past.

Schelling, too, fully in line with its over-determination, still appealed to this past for interpretation. As has been seen, the evidence which the work of art manifests is one before which thought finds itself *überrascht und beglückt; blessed*. The work of art never was a simple "fact," notwithstanding Schelling's commitments concerning what he called from the outset of the *System* its *Evidenz* (1). It is rather, an *Offenbarung*, a revelation, a category for which modernism had no resources. Heidegger was perhaps not far removed from this site in tracing the *phainomenon* of phenomenology (and ultimately the aesthetic) back to the problem of *das Offenbare*, "that which shows itself, the self-showing, the revealed (*das was sich zeigt, das Sichzeigende, das Offenbare*)."⁷⁸ It is a site to which Julia Kristeva, too, closer perhaps to Benjamin, has had recent recourse:

Revelatio translates *Apocalypsis*, uncovering, the unveiling of a truth, the vision of an impossible future, the annunciation of an explosion; thus a *gnosis*; knowledge (*connaissance*) but also a relation of intimation. Neither becoming philosophical (*aletheia*) nor wisdom (*sophia*), the revelation is the intimate irruption of a representation which places me at risk. . . .⁷⁹

If Schelling himself would later demure from the path of this trope, in fact invoking the term's fully literal sense in composing a *Philosophie der Offenbarung*⁸⁰ and reconstituting its predicates strictly in the domain of the theological, his 1800 *Augenblick* struggled by means of it to articulate the work of art's *Anrede*. It was an *Anrede* whose evidence, one which "could not be denied," nonetheless could neither comply with strict proof, a provocation then which occurred without recourse to simple refutation, opening instead upon another evidence which distanced itself from the critical tribunal, sum-

moning the latter's respect precisely in its withdrawal. In so doing it forced a rewriting of what it is to commit the work of art, the *interpretandum* to a text, invoking an extension (*Erweiterung*), to engage a Kantian trope, which forced interpretation beyond all strict foundations—extending, thereby, the reach of the rational—in placing it at risk.⁸¹

¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 19.

² Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York, 1971), p. 79.

³ Quoted in Heidegger, p. 80. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, Volume I, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 9-11.

⁴ Martin Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us: Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger," trans. John P. Caputo and Maria P. Alter, *Philosophy Today* 20, no. 4 (1976), 283.

⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 19.

⁶ See Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (London, 1984), p. 175.

⁷ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Historical Transformations of Reason," in *Rationality Today*, ed. Theodore F. Geraets (Univ. of Ottawa Press, 1979).

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York, 1968), p. 157, translation altered.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 16.

¹⁵ *Plato's Republic* (607b) trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis, 1974), p. 251.

¹⁶ Plato, (534b) *Ion*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford University Press, 1892), p. 288.

¹⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 14.

¹⁸ The term "Augenblick" is used by Schelling to describe the work of art's revelation of "reinen Sein" in the 1807 lecture, "Über das verhältnis der bilden Knuste zu der Nature," in F.W.J. Schelling, *Schellings Werke*, Bd. III, ed. Schroter (Munich, 1927), p. 403. Granted this elevation of the work of art, Walter Biemel's claim should perhaps be taken seriously: "Schelling's philosophy of art is the first unprecedented philosophical acknowledgement of the significance of art." See his "Philosophy and Art," trans. Parvis Emad, *Man and World* 12 (1979), 269.

¹⁹ Friedrich Schelling, Letter to G.W.F. Hegel, January 5, 1795, in *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler (Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 29.

²⁰ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 12.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Compare Schelling's similar characterization and criticism of Hegel in his *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, *Schellings Werke*, Bd. 6, p. 87 ff.

²⁴ Schelling, Letter to G.W.F. Hegel, November 2,

1807, p. 80-81.

²⁵ F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), trans. Peter Heath (University Press of Virginia, 1978), p. 1. All subsequent references to this text will be parenthesized in the text.

²⁶ See Friedrich Schiller's response to a conversation with Schelling questioning what he calls the Idealist's "Bewusstlosen," detailed in a letter to Goethe, 27 March, 1801, *Schillers Brief* (Konigstein, 1983), p. 400-1.

²⁷ See Michel Foucault, "Foucault repond a Sartre," *La Quinzaine Literaire* 46 (March 1-15, 1968), p. 20. For further discussion of the issue, see my "Kant and Foucault: On the Ends of Man," *Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie*, Maart, 1985.

²⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York, 1973), p. 61 (A15/B 29).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 112 (A78/B103).

³⁰ G.W.F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, trans. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 80.

³¹ As Adorno has noted then (p. 244), the notion of genius in this regard is the *intellectus archtypus* of German Idealism.

³² See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York, 1956), p. 58. The notion of an *aesthetische Imperativ*, it may be noted, had been discussed by Friederich von Schlegel, without concern for its philosophical status, three years previously in his *Über das Studium der Griechischen Poesie*. See *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, Bd. 1 (Munich, 1979), p. 214.

³³ Among Schelling's commentators Dieter Jahnig has perhaps best seen the importance of the concept of *Überraschung* in discussing the problem of certainty and transcendence in Schelling's deduction of art. Nonetheless, Jahnig's discussion remains limited to its status as a feeling under the rubric of "the empirical character of this condition" and is excluded from the discussion of what he calls the problem of the condition's "metaphysical significance," as well as from the problem of the sacred predicates which Schelling invokes in its explanation. See *Schelling: Die Kunst in der Philosophie*, Bd. 2, *Die Wahrheitsfunktion der Kunst*, (Pfullingen, 1969), p. 38f.

³⁴ See F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Kunst* (1802-02), *Schellings Werke*, Bd. III, p. 393.

³⁵ As Jean-Francois Marquet has stated, "Schelling's 'Wo die Kunst sei, soll die Wissenschaft erst hinkommen' obviously has certain anticipatory Freudian overtones." See "Schelling et Le Destin de L'Art" in *Actualité de Schelling*, ed. G. Planty-Bonjour (Paris, 1979), p. 77.

³⁶ Friederich Nietzsche "The Birth of Tragedy," in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York, 1968), p. 19.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 33.

³⁸ F.W.J. Schelling, *On University Studies* (1802), trans. E. S. Morgan (Ohio University Press, 1966), p. 146.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴² F.W.J. Schelling, *Bruno or On the Natural and the Divine Principle of Things*, trans. Michel G. Vater (State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 132.

⁴³ Luigi Pareyson, *L'estetica di Schelling* (Torino,

1964), p. 29.

⁴⁴ The literature here and the various explanatory options are surveyed and adjudicated by Xavier Tilliette in a presentation to the French translation of Schelling's writings on art, *Textes Esthétiques*, trans. Alain Pernet, 1978), p. xxxvi ff.

⁴⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on The History of Philosophy*, p. 527.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 526.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Kant's *Faktum* of pure reason too, it should be recalled, was one in which "the moral law is given, as an apodictically certain fact" whose reality "can be proved through no deduction." See my "Kant on Autonomy, the Ends of Humanity, and the Possibility of Morality," forthcoming in *Kantstudien*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

⁴⁹ F.W.J. Schelling, "Das altes Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus," translated in Norbert Guterman, "Introduction" to *On University Studies*, p. xii. It should be noted that while Guterman claims Schelling as the author of this document, this remains a disputed issue. What remains true, in any case, is that the passage cited here is, certainly, at least not inconsistent with Schelling's writings during this period.

⁵⁰ "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism," p. 157.

⁵¹ Hegel, *Lectures on The History of Philosophy*, p. 525.

⁵² "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism," p. 157.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵⁴ See for example, Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague, 1982), p. 106-07.

⁵⁵ See Plato, *The Republic* (534c), p. 185.

⁵⁶ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague, 1970) p. 22.

⁵⁷ See Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York, 1968) p. 71.

⁵⁸ The argument presented here then rejoins Gadamer's claim that an adequate account of the foundation of hermeneutics must confront the history of aesthetics. See Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York, 1975), p. 39ff; p. 433ff. Nonetheless, while Gadamer rightly emphasizes the role of the aesthetic here and acknowledges that what is involved is a phenomenon in which "what is clear is not proved and not absolutely certain, but it asserts itself by reason of its own merits" (441-2), it may be necessary to depart from his account to the extent that it presents a conception of truth which remains perhaps recalcitrant with regard to the problem of incommensurability, remaining still "speculative," as Kant put it in the first *Critique*, "hostile to heterogeneity" (A655/B683). While Gadamer rightly recognizes, for example, the importance of Schelling's discussion of the aesthetic as symbolic (equally emphasizing its sacred past), the problem of the "immeasurable" and the underdetermination of interpretation remains unthought (p. 69f.) and hence his dialogical theory of interpretation always remains in close proximity to the metaphysics of Hegel's objective spirit. See my "Between Truth and Method: Gadamer and the Problem of Justifica-

tion in Interpretative Practices," *The University of Dayton Review: Collected Papers from the University of Dayton's 11th Annual Philosophy Colloquium on Hermeneutics* 17, no. 1. (Summer, 1984).

⁵⁹ And yet the viewing of art as an inexhaustible *interpretandum*, as has been seen, is not the only, nor the final sense of Schelling's construal. In fact there is a sense in which as well there can be *no* interpretation of the work of art. Art can *only* present a sign for the infinite and not its symbol; one whose content remains fixed and determinate. In fact Schelling at one point, invoking the metaphysics of exemplification, claims that there can be *only one* work of art:

(T)here is properly speaking but one absolute work of art, which may indeed exist in altogether different exemplars (*Exemplaren*), yet it is still only one, even though it should not exist in its most original form (*Ursprunglichten Gestalt*) (231, translation altered).

⁶⁰ See Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise On the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 189. See also my "Reading Heidegger," *Research in Phenomenology* 15 (1985).

⁶¹ See Gadamer, p. 264.

⁶² As Adorno asserted then: "Heterogeneity is inherent in works of art" (132). Consequently, understood classically, "(a)esthetics cannot hope to grasp works of art, if it treats them as hermeneutic objects. What at present needs to be grasped is their unintelligibility" (173). Adorno, still, operates here within an archaic view of interpretation and *Verstehen* as a reproduction of an original meaning, as "reenactment" or "reproduction" (177). He must affirm too that the work of art, precisely because of its enigmatic equality eluding simple *Verstehen*, still renders interpretation necessary: "Every single one opens itself to interpretive reason because its enigmatic quality is a deficiency, a condition of want" (186). Nonetheless, the interpretation called forth must remain a respect for what escapes the concept. "Achieving an adequate interpretive understanding of a work of art means demystifying certain enigmatic dimensions without trying to shed light on its constitutive enigma" (177).

⁶³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, op. cit. 402.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Aesthetics, Volume I*, op. cit., p. 300.

⁶⁶ See Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" in *Reflections*, tr. Edmund Jephcott (New York, 1979), p. 189. For Benjamin himself this aesthetics suffered from a certain inconsistency. It was in the end "undialectical," refusing to extend the mystery it ascribes to art equally to the 'everyday world.' For related discussion of these matters see Benjamin's doctoral dissertation, *Der Begriff der Kunstskritik in der deutschen Romantik* (1919) (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt-am-Main, 1973).

⁶⁷ See Plato, *The Republic* 508b.

⁶⁸ See Michel Foucault's discussion of a similar issue in "The Discourse on Language" in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York, 1972), p. 235.

⁶⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 160. Gadamer, too, recognizes the event of this

surprise as fundamental to the hermeneutic experience, again without confronting its ultimate philosophical implications. See his "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics" in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David E. Linge (University of California Press, 1976), p. 101:

But [the communicative intent] that holds for all speaking is valid in an eminent way for the experience of art. It is more than an anticipation of meaning. It is what I would like to call surprise at the meaning of what is said.

⁷⁰ cf. Aristotle's claim that all enquiry proceeds out of wonder (*Thaumazein*). *Metaphysics*, Book A, trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle (Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 16 (983b).

⁷¹ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 99.

⁷² Ibid., p. 55. Xavier Tilliette quite rightly contrasts the ultimate serenity and harmony of Schelling's final account of art and the beautiful with Breton's "Beauty will be convulsive or it will not be at all." See the latter's *What is Surrealism?* (London, 1936) and Tilliette's presentation to Schelling's *Textes Esthétiques*, p. xxviii. Nonetheless, to the extent that the work of art accomplishes its serenity only by a struggle with the *Unbegreiflich* by which it is an opening out onto a higher domain, a sur-reality, the principle of the latter is perhaps already nascent.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 118-19. Cp. Plato's description of the experience of shudder (*Ephrixe*) before the beautiful in *Phaedrus* 251a, a shudder which commentators have linked to the sacred past of Greek mystery cults and the daimonic.

See for example G. J. DeVries, *A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato* (Amsterdam, 1969), p. 154.

⁷⁴ See Friedrich von Schlegel, *Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie* (1797) quoted and commented upon by Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas* (The Hague, 1980), p. 151.

⁷⁵ Adorno, p. 75.

⁷⁶ Nietzsche, p. 42.

⁷⁷ Cf. Hegel, *Aesthetics* Vol. I, p. 71:

(T)he work of art . . . is essentially a question, an address to the responsive breast, a call (*Anrede*) to the mind and the spirit."

⁷⁸ See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 51 (translation altered).

⁷⁹ Julie Kristeva, "Événement et Révélation," *L'Infini* 5 (Winter, 1984), 3-4.

⁸⁰ See F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, op. cit.

⁸¹ Compare Schelling's own indications of such an extension in the *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, op. cit., p. 159, considered there in relation to practical reason:

Thus your theoretical reason would become a quite different reason; with the help of practical reason it would be broadened (*erweitert*) so as to admit a new field alongside the old.