

Aesthetic Investigations

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Form and History. Hegel's Philosophy of Art Today

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Abstract: In this article, I discuss the philosophical position that marks the end of the Age of Aesthetics: Hegel's philosophy of art. I demonstrate how it has passed the test of time, and will further defend its systematic outlines. I reconstruct Hegel's philosophy of art in a way that relies less on Hegel's own conceptual terminology, but, rather, attempts to shed light on the insights it can afford with regard to some more recent discussions: on the one hand, discussions about how to read Hegel of contemporary debates in postanalytical and continental philosophy, and on the other hand, in light of the post-Hegelian philosophy of art.

I reconstruct Hegel's philosophy of art in the light of two key concepts: form and unity. Overall, my article has two parts. The first one deals with Hegel's concept of form, the second deals with his concept of unity. In the background of my argument stands Hegel's thought that art is a particular form of the development of the concept.

Hegel's theory allows for an immanent reconstruction of art and thus a thinking of the autonomy of art. We should describe art as a particular form of experience for which a specific unity is characteristic—a kind of unity that entails that the form of experience cannot be understood in a formalist way, but must rather be understood as something that develops in and through history.

In this article, I will discuss the philosophical position that marks the end of the Age of Aesthetics: Hegel's philosophy of art. More specifically, I will demonstrate how it has passed the test of time, and will further defend its systematic outlines. To this end, I will reconstruct Hegel's philosophy of art in a way that relies less on Hegel's own conceptual terminology, but rather attempts to shed light on the insights it can afford with regard to some

more recent discussions: on the one hand, discussions about how to read Hegel in the light of contemporary debates in postanalytical and continental philosophy, and on the other hand, in light of the post-Hegelian philosophy of art.¹ I will reconstruct Hegel's philosophy of art in the light of two key concepts: form and unity. Overall, my article has two parts. The first one deals with Hegel's concept of form, the second deals with his concept of unity. In the background of my argument stands Hegel's thought that art is a particular form of the development of the concept. In general, I hope to convince you that an advantage of Hegel's theory is that it allows for an *immanent* reconstruction of art and thus a thinking of the autonomy of art. The basic thought I will try to derive from Hegel's theory goes as follows: We should describe art as a particular *form* of experience for which a specific *unity* is characteristic—a kind of unity that entails that the form of experience cannot be understood in a formalist way, but must rather be understood as something that develops in and through history.²

ON THE FORM OF THE EXPERIENCE OF ARTWORKS

It should not surprise anybody when I characterize Hegel's project as one that treats art as a reflexive practice. To understand that art opens up a specific kind of reflection is basically to say that our confrontation with artistic objects and events entails a reflection of ourselves in the medium of something other. The plausibility of such a conception of art may be seen by distinguishing it from two other ways of giving a functional account of art, namely in terms of an epistemic (a) and a political (b) conception of art.

The epistemic conception of art (a) claims that the role of art within the human form of life should be explained in terms of its function of disclosing knowledge. Of course, denying that disclosing knowledge is an internal function of art doesn't necessarily mean to deny that we can learn something in and through our encounters with works of art. A historical novel, for example, can afford knowledge of history, and an abstract work of architecture sometimes might offer us knowledge about physical principles. Nevertheless, there is something lacking in the explanation of art as something that discloses knowledge: To learn something about history or physical principles one doesn't need to contemplate works of art. In fact, one should rather prefer to read a history book or a handbook of physics instead of spending time on contemplating what art has to say about the respective subjects. In other words, if one doesn't want to introduce the idea of a non-translatable, art-specific kind of knowledge—an idea that is hard to understand, as has frequently been shown by major proponents of the hermeneutical as well as postanalytical tradition of the twentieth century—then understanding art as something whose internal function is to enable knowledge ultimately renders art superfluous with regard to its contribution to the human form of life. The argument against an epistemic definition of art thus relies on the idea that art

is an autonomous practice whose contribution to our form of life cannot be summed up in such simple, direct terms. From a Hegelian perspective, understanding art as something that discloses knowledge—a famous position here being Goodman—overlooks the fact that even in those cases where we learn something in and through works of art, art gives us perspectives on our knowledge rather than entailing new knowledge.³ This is essentially the Hegelian alternative to an epistemic definition of art: Art does not disclose knowledge, but rather enables us to reflect on what it means to be a knower and agent as such. An epistemic explanation of art must also take into consideration that such a disclosure of knowledge by no means applies exclusively to art. We would completely misunderstand the idea of an epistemic explanation of art if we claimed that we could obtain knowledge about the style of an improvisation by John Coltrane by listening to it. Of course, we might develop knowledge about the way Coltrane plays by following his improvisations or even by transcribing them. But if we overlook the fact that such knowledge only has something to do with the artistic event as an artistic event in the case that it plays a role in the adequate appreciation of its artistic *success* we would reduce the musical event to a mere symptom. Understanding art in terms of an epistemic purpose is in general a way of treating art symptomatologically. In short: An epistemic explanation of artistic success is an *external* explanation of art.

It doesn't look much different with the political conception of art (b). I will not discuss the possibility of describing any work of art in terms of its political valences, because such an account simply reduces works of art to the external contexts they are embedded in or to the external connotations they bring about. One must and should of course not deny that there are works of art that immanently address political ends. But when works of art negotiate such purposes, they are somehow categorically different from being mere extensions of those purposes. A mere aesthetic extension of a political agenda isn't a work of art; instead of encouraging political action, political art is negotiating the political itself. In other words, there is something defective with the idea that, say, there could ever be a genuinely republican or democratic work of art. Works of art are more and something different than mere rhetorical devices to put forward a political agenda. As with the epistemic functional account of art, claiming that art can be an extension of a political agenda makes it into something replaceable. Of course, this isn't to rule out the possibility that works of art play with and thematize the borders between art and politics. But whoever thinks of himself becoming a participant of the right political movement after visiting an art exhibition is in fact someone who participates in the practice of talking about such political movements and not someone who is participating in such a movement.⁴ Given the irreducibility that is characteristic for art in its negotiation of the political, or to put it differently: given art's resistance towards being reduced to something political, we should

also avoid splitting the political into the political and an artistically specific political, because this would simply be a duplication of the political, and should thus be avoided.

In its proper concept, art exists autonomously of epistemic and political ends, which does not however mean that it cannot address such ends. What sets the concept of art as a reflexive practice or in other words: practice of self-understanding apart from those purposes just mentioned? I think we can understand the difference if we reject an epistemic misreading of the idea of art as a practice of self-understanding: To say that we engage with ourselves in our experience of artworks does not mean that we gain knowledge about ourselves. We would then misconstrue the self as an object among other objects. It is the lesson of German Idealism that one misconstrues the self if one understands it to be an empirical object; for Kant and Hegel the self is not a mysterious ‘other kind of object’, like Descartes thought of it in terms of a substance categorically different to the physical, but the self has to be understood within Kant’s conceptual framework as spontaneity and within Hegel’s conceptual framework as Spirit.⁵ Rather than being an object, the self is the very possibility of relating to objects at all. If we adopt the idea that the subject is a relation rather than an object, this entails that every time we address what we are we undergo a change. For what I am, it makes a difference of how I understand myself; understanding myself differently than before entails that I become someone else than I have been.⁶ If art is to be understood in terms of a practice of self-understanding, this entails that we undergo a change in our encounters with works of art. We don’t come out of our encounters with works of art the same as when we went in. This is why there is a conceptual connection between art and experience: works of art are only alive and kept from collapsing e.g. into mere historical documents of their time insofar as they make themselves open to being experienced.⁷ Experience is thereby understood neither in terms of an empirical concept nor as an experience of sensuous properties. It is rather understood in terms of a certain kind of passivity, which in the case of our experiences with art is not the opposite of a certain kind of activity. Experiences are not something that we are capable of controlling, but that in a certain sense happen to us.⁸ One cannot have the same experience with a work of art twice—even if that does not mean that one can only have an experience with it once. This notion of experience is not to be understood in such a way that all experiences with works of art possess the phenomenal character of a revolution—nevertheless, even non-revolutionary experiences bring about this kind of transformation through the artwork’s specific mode of highlighting and weighting, illuminating and focusing its elements and properties. Art as art thus stands in opposition to mechanical procedures and has no algorithms.⁹

The crucial lesson of Hegel’s position now lies in the fact that this dimension of art is not understood as being the *content* of the experience of artworks, but rather as an aspect of the *form* of such experiences. It is impor-

tant to notice that what is called form here doesn't mean the form of a work of art in a manifest sense. I am not yet talking about appearances or structures of works of art at all. In the spirit of contemporary neo-Aristotelian debates, talking about the form of the experience of art rather means the form of a practice—similar to the way that the good in those debates isn't understood as the content of human action, but rather as an aspect of the form of what it means for something to be an action at all.¹⁰ To put it differently: It is not that all works of art are—to take a notion from Danto—*about* themselves. Rather, the point is that whatever they may be about or whatever aesthetic structure they exemplify reflexivity has to be understood as an aspect of the form of the practice of art, and not the content of specific works of art themselves. Only if we understand Hegel's idea that art brings about a certain kind of reflexivity in terms of form and not of content it can be a conception of art as art. Among other problems, it is obvious that understanding reflexivity as the content of art would be too exclusive and at the same time too inclusive. Of course, all practices of reflection are performative transformations of ourselves. By appealing to Hegel's differentiation of three paradigmatic forms of self-understanding—art, religion and philosophy—we can reconstruct the difference between different kinds of reflection not in terms of a *differentia specifica*, but in such a way that the function of reflection is determined as the form of a practice. Hegel classifies artistic practices, religious practices and the practices of philosophy as inhabiting the realm of absolute spirit.¹¹ We can translate Hegel's notion of absolute spirit in terms of clusters of practices whose function lies not in epistemic or political ends, but solely in the end of reflecting on ourselves.

In religion—a practice one should describe as a reflexive practice because otherwise it would only be a more sophisticated version of superstition—the collective shaping of the self-understanding of a community happens in the medium of imagination.¹² It articulates itself in a constant retelling of certain narratives and related rituals. Here already a difference to art emerges: That which is communicated in religion gains a degree of autonomy with regard to the respective way it is embodied—e.g. as it is embodied in this narration or that liturgy. The content of a religious narrative is not exhausted in exactly one way of telling it, but can be told in many different ways. But with artistic novels, for example, the situation is quite different: You cannot tell the story otherwise than how it is told there, because the novel is nothing else than its style of narration, just as filmic narration is nothing more than the specific usage of camera, light, movement etc.—which is why a remake of a movie is never a mere copy of the same work, but is itself rather a new work. In contrast to the embodiment of religion, the embodiment in art is completely irreducible.

In contrast to religion, what is said in philosophy is completely independent from the specificity of its embodiment. The medium of philosophy is thought. Of course, this does not mean that a philosophical thought can

exist without being embodied in some way. Rather, it means that an understanding of philosophical propositions is articulated in and through the articulation of those propositions in one's own words. Even though no philosophical thought can be a philosophical thought without some form of embodiment, there is nothing lost in its reformulation in other words, if indeed this reformulation is a reformulation of this thought. A philosophical thought can thus be articulated in many different ways and be made fruitful in many different contexts. Understanding a philosophical thought is thus a matter of translating it into one's own language. Nothing could be less true for art: The understanding of artistic objects and events never means working out a content that can be articulated in potentially limitless ways, but is rather nothing more than *interpretatively retracing the form of the work in question*. When I speak of interpretation, I don't just mean explicit verbal interpretations. Rather, interpretation is already in play when one experiences a work of art, even on a seemingly purely perceptual level.¹³ There is no innocent encounter with a work of art, and even though it might be said that works of art also embody mere aesthetic properties and that those properties are a matter of mere perception, aesthetic properties are not what makes a work of art a work of art.¹⁴ Works of art are never a matter of mere perception, because *every work of art constitutes for itself what counts as an element of it*. Every work of art in a certain way speaks its own language—which of course cannot be a language in a literal sense, because it is not translatable.¹⁵ The fact that works of art are not translatable is thus neither a matter of a given primordial sensuality nor a matter of non-conceptual moments—both are merely different names of the myth of the given.¹⁶ Every element of a work of art is thus the element that it is in light of its relation to the other elements of that work. Even though the same voicing of a chord might be used in a sonata by Beethoven and in an improvisation of Bill Evans, they are not identical, even if they are indistinguishable with regard to their manifest sensual properties. To put this idea in another way: Art does not so much consist of elements, but rather *constitutes* its elements, which in no way contradicts the idea that art comes along in styles and genres.¹⁷ But with every aesthetically successful contribution to a style or genre, the style or genre is determined anew. In short: While you have to paraphrase a philosophical text in your own words, you have to mimetically retrace the form of the work of art.¹⁸ Thus, even with those works of art that we wouldn't phenomenally call disturbing remain at a certain distance to our discursive rationality insofar as they embody a different rationality: an *aesthetic* rationality.

With regard to this analysis we can determine the specificity of the form of the experience of art as follows: *The self-understanding that is afforded by a work of art is nothing else and nothing more than what is entailed by mimetically retracing the artistic form of the work in question*. To clarify, the notion of form is of course used in two different ways in this paper—there is the notion of the form of the experience of art and there is the notion of the

form of the work of art. The basic idea is that the reflexivity enabled by art is nothing more than what happens when we mimetically retrace the specific form that is constituted in and through the specific work of art in question. Such a conception of artistic form should not be understood in a formalist manner. Even though a work of art can only show us something when and if it shows itself, the artistic materials or methods employed don't at all entail the idea that those materials and methods are cut off from their usages outside of art; even though the artistic use of words in literature constitutes words as words anew, words of course have meaning outside of art.¹⁹ With regard to this conception of artistic form, it cannot be emphasized enough that what Hegel calls the content of art is nothing else and nothing more than what is articulated through the recipient's act of mimetically retracing the artistic form of a work of art.²⁰ Thus the common charge that Hegel's philosophy of art is ultimately reducible to an aesthetics of content is misleading.²¹ Of course, I don't deny that Hegel often speaks about the content of art in his *Lectures on Fine Art*. But it must be noted that the content of an artwork is not something else than its form. All of Hegel's remarks about the divergence of form and content are remarks about works of art that to a certain extent don't exemplify aesthetic success and that are thus a privation of what it means to be a work of art in a full-fledged sense.

Thus, what Hegel says about content and form must not be understood as a prescriptive meta-rule of art. Rather, the divergence of form and content only makes sense in the case of privations, i.e. in the case of some type of artistic failure. In other words, understanding the form of the experience of art in terms of the mimetic retracing of the artwork's form means conceiving the reflexive value of art as being nothing more and nothing other than what it means to mimetically retrace the form of a work of art. The act of mimetically retracing the form of a work of art isn't purely passive, even if it means something that is ultimately not under our control. But allowing ourselves to be determined by a work of art is not something that happens to us in the same way that we could be hit by a hurricane. It is rather—to use a fine notion from Martin Seel who borrows it from Adorno—a certain kind of active passivity.²² The passivity is not only an active passivity in the sense that one has to do certain things, such as listening correctly or looking at certain aspects. Rather, every time somebody mimetically retraces the form of a work of art, the meaning of the work—and thus what the work itself is—is determined anew, without contradicting the idea that it is indeed a determination of what the work itself is.²³ Thus, the determination on both sides—of both the recipient and the work—can only be understood in light of each other. Whether a certain way of mimetically retracing the form of a work of art is indeed a mimetically retracing of the work of art in question or rather the projection of something onto it is thus impossible to decide without taking into account the collective discursive practice of debating precisely

this question—which is another way in which our interpretative practice is indispensable for understanding what a work of art is.

To say it again: Hegel's conception of art can only be a conception of art in a general sense if it is understood to rely on an aspect of the form of the experience of art rather than on its content. Thus, it would be a mistake if we were to ascribe to Hegel the idea that all art is self-reflexive in the sense that every work of art is *about* art. Being a work of art entails that it presents something about us in presenting itself, a notion that naturally also allows for the possibility that art thematizes our conception of art; but this is just one possibility of art and not a necessary condition for something to be a work of art. It would also be a mistake if we were to claim that the recipient's reflexive self-understanding in their experience of an artwork were an additional activity alongside mimetically retracing the form of the artwork in question, as if it were some sort of distraction from the artwork. In what follows I now want to work out the specific unity that is exemplified by the form of the experience of art. More precisely, I want to develop the thought, that for Hegel, forms of reflexive practice are by no means transcendental or ahistorical forms, but rather forms that are developed in and through history.

THE KIND OF UNITY EXEMPLIFIED BY THE FORM OF THE EXPERIENCE OF ARTWORKS

If one claims that the form of the experience of a work of art is to be explained in terms of reflection, it could be objected that one holds an essentialist account of art. Instead of countering this objection, I indeed would like to put forward this conception as an essentialist conception of art—but, as I will show, it is a kind of essentialist conception of art that is immune to established arguments against essentialist accounts of art. In other words. Despite being an essentialist account, the proposed account of art is understood to be compatible with what we could call the cluster-theory intuition, which maintains that there are various forms of art and that art is subject to historical change.²⁴ Such an essentialist account is possible because for Hegel, art is nothing more than what has been achieved in and through the singular works of art within a tradition of artistic success. More precisely, the essence of something for Hegel is nothing other than what has been achieved in and through its historical development, such that the essence of something shows itself in and through the historical process of its realization.²⁵ In order to be something, it has to be articulated in the historical development of human practice.²⁶ Thus, what art is can by no means be determined in a transcendental manner or in any other ahistorical way, but must rather be determined by the historical process itself. The philosophy of art thus cannot predict the future of art, and in this sense art has no end. On the other hand, Hegel of course famously speaks of the end of art.²⁷ But what he means by saying that art comes to an end—or, more precisely, that art has already

come to an end—is that art no longer serves as our primary way of reflecting ourselves. Absolute knowledge does not mark an endpoint in the sense that nothing qualitatively new comes into the world anymore, but rather only insofar as we became free subjects in such a way that we no longer think that god or natural forces determine our fate, but rather understand ourselves as determining what we are.²⁸

The kind of unity exemplified by the form of the experience of art reconstructed here must not be understood as anything other than what has been worked out in the tradition of art. It is neither an abstraction nor is it an ideal in such a way that it would allow one to determine what individual artworks in the future will look like. It is thus a conception of form that no longer understands form as something opposed to the contents that have been worked out within the history of art. I want to now render this notion of form intelligible in terms of the relation of the particular (*Besonderes*) to the general (*Allgemeines*) by contrasting the Hegelian way of thinking this relation with two others. In the picture I draw here, the form of the experience of art is the general and the singular experience of an individual work of art is the particular. The two conceptions I want to distinguish are first a reconstruction of the relation of the general and the particular in terms of a conventional definition (i), and second a reconstruction of the relation of the general and the particular in an Aristotelean spirit (ii). Finally, I want to outline Hegel's non-formalistic conception of form as an alternative (iii).

The conventional definition, understood as giving necessary and sufficient conditions, treats the particular as a mere case of the general in such a way that each particular is an instance of the general in one and the same way (i). The logical form of such a definition entails the claim of being able to capture all works of art in the past, present and future. When a work of art emerges that isn't covered by the definition, the definition has to be revised. In short: The proposed individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions might be revealed to be too inclusive or exclusive in light of works of art produced or discovered in the future. Of course, there are many problems with and challenges to the conventional definition.²⁹ The problem that I am interested in stems from the fact that for such a position, *the general is logically understood as being separate from its particulars*. In other words, the general is not understood as something that is developed through the history of its particulars (with regard to the abstract generality of some post-structural discourses on the aesthetics of film for a similar criticism also.³⁰ Thus, every particular exemplifies the general in exactly the same way as every other particular. The historical development of artistic practice thus enters into the picture only as a problem or a disturbance of the definition and not as something that is constitutive for what it means for something to be a work of art. Even those more recent conceptions that have opened the conventional definition to alternative ways of treating it stay within its general framework, insofar as the general is conceived of as something ex-

ternal to or other than what the particulars are; conceptions like the cluster definition of art or the disjunctivist account come to mind here (notice that a disjunctivist account which has the logical form that X is a work of art either if it exemplifies the property or cluster of properties A or exemplifies the property or cluster of properties B is a completely distinctive project from what has been discussed as disjunctivism in epistemology, which categorically separates veridical perception from delusions, or in anthropology, which categorically separates animal from man; for a critique of some versions of the highest-common-factor theory.³¹ The particular is thus a mere instance of the general. A symptom of such a conception is that it forces one to think about what art is in terms of mere examples understood as being interchangeable manifestations of the static general category of art. More convincing would be a conception of the relation of the general to the particular which would allow us to understand the particulars as something irreducible to the general. The lesson learned from the problems of the conventional definition and its successors is of course not that we should simply give up the general in favour of the particular. Because this would bring about the collapse of all distinctions and would fall into the pitfalls of the myth of the given, so that ironically such a conception would no longer be able to think of the particular as a particular, or, better yet, as anything.

A better explication of the idea that the general is not external to the particular, thus in a certain way making the latter indispensable for the former, lies in the idea that the general is nothing other than the internal form of the particular—an idea which obviously follows in the footsteps of Aristotelian thought (ii). We obviously do not say that something is alive simply because it exemplifies, alongside its other characteristic modes of activity, an additional special property, namely its aliveness; for being alive entails nothing more than the unity of these activities, which in its turn is exemplified by each and every one of them.³² Similarly, man is not rational simply because he possesses another, further feature in contrast to mere animals—namely that of being rational. Rather, man's being rational refers to the form of human activity as a whole.³³ The particular—*this* living being, *this* human being, *this* work of art—is not a mere case of the general—life, man and art. The particular is rather a more or less *bona fide* instantiation of the general. Just as there are *bona fide* instantiations and privations in the realm of life, and just as there are *bona fide* instantiations and privations in the realm of men in terms of actions and thought being more or less rational, there are *bona fide* and privative instantiations of works of art. Thus, the general is no longer an external determination of the particular, but rather entails that the particular is indeed the particular that it is. Understanding the general as the immanent form of the particular thus articulates itself in specific ways of judging, in the specific ways our thought directs itself towards a specific phenomenon, whereby thinking about such a phenomenon means that our thought is exemplifying precisely this mode of directedness.³⁴ In a certain

sense, this way of thinking about the unity of a form marks a point of no return. But as I want to show now, the Aristotelian conception—or better: the Neo-Aristotelian conception—is nevertheless subject to a criticism similar to that made against the conventional definition. Even if the general is not understood as something external to or different than the particular, *the general is nevertheless something that is neither affected nor transformed by its particulars*. This is due to the fact that each particular exemplifies the general in precisely the same way as every other particular. Although the particular can exemplify the general in a *bona fide* way or in a privative way, the general itself knows no development with regard to its particulars. In other words, the general is again beyond the reach of the particulars and form is understood as something that is given a priori, but not as something that is developed in and through its particulars. Form has no history in the Aristotelian conception. If, by contrast, the general were to be understood as something that in a certain sense is nothing other than the totality of its particulars, one could truly think the general as something that is not external to the particular. This is so, because the general would then cover all its particulars in terms of its own development in and through those particulars. I take it to be that with such a non-formalist conception of form, we have arrived at Hegel's conception of the unity of form.³⁵

Within Hegel's conception (iii), the general remains a general insofar as it does not collapse into any of its particulars. But it is nevertheless a general that is not beyond the reach of its particulars. For Hegel, the general is nothing but the new and further determination that is made by every new particular against the background of all the particulars that have up to now belonged to this general. Put differently, the form of the experience of art is not a form that is detached from history, but is rather nothing other than the historical development of art; it is a form that is further determined and determined anew by every new work of art. One can formulate the guiding thought as follows: Each particular enters into what will have been the general. Each particular thus comes to be an event. It is thus understood as something irreducibly new, in that it is not treated as being just another instance of the same, but rather further develops what the general will have been. Concerning Hegel's conception of the unity of a form, one can thus say that the general is nothing other than the totality of its particulars. However, in a certain way it is still something else—but not something else in terms of another particular or any other entity. The general is nothing other than its particulars insofar as it is nothing above or beside them. Nevertheless, the general is something else insofar as it will have been worked out in a further and different way with regard to its particulars in the future. The general, to put it differently, is something that is constitutively unfinished and incomplete (*unabgeschlossen*). The general is thus intrinsically historical, insofar as we can never say what it is before its particulars have determined what it will have been—this is why the logical grammar of Hegel's conception of form

has to be expressed in the future anterior. To be historical implies being constitutively incomplete in such a way that this incompleteness carries no connotations of deficiency. Because to be historical in such a way entails that we cannot look above or beyond that which has been done in the history of art. The incompleteness in question is thus not a primordial incompleteness; it is rather an incompleteness that is itself developed in the light of every new work of art. In other words, it is incompleteness that itself has a history. Such incompleteness is tied to the history of what has been done in art along with its reverse side, both implied in and immanent to this history.

Let me briefly exemplify this idea. What we could call the sense of the work of art is not finished with the work's completion by the artist. In the light of future developments of music, for example, Wagner could be seen as introducing acoustic colour to the template of musical materials. In the light of the invention of bebop, the music of the swing era begins to sound different, not simply because its style and idioms have been developed further in bebop, but because these styles and idioms themselves become something new and different through their retroactive determination in the new musical form. In the light of the rhythms of jazz music, the rhythms of baroque dance music start to sound different too. The sense of a work of art is thus not enclosed in the moment of its production, but rather is worked out in an unforeseen and unforeseeable way. And precisely this means that works of art are genuinely historical entities. Even objects of the past can be discovered to be works of art in light of the developments of the contemporary art world, whereas some objects cease to be considered works of art in the light of these developments. Hegel's lesson is that all these developments don't take place in a well-demarcated area, but that with every one of them, the concept of what a work of art is changes. What I have called the form of the experience of art thus is itself something that develops historically.

This Hegelian determination of the relation of the general and the particular, which can be called a *retroactive-dialectical* determination, goes along with a kind of temporality that is no longer homogeneous. This is due to the fact that in the light of every new particular, not only the present and future of the general are negotiated anew. Rather, as I have tried to show, the past is also negotiated anew when in light of the present particular, new aspects of past works of art, styles etc. are discovered, thus changing the meaning as well as the significance and sense of those works, arts, styles etc.³⁶

The form of the experience of art thus exemplifies a unity that can be reconstructed in terms of the *identity of identity and non-identity*. Herein lies a major insight and an aspect of the actuality of Hegel's philosophy of art. It thereby enables us to do justice to what we can call the cluster-intuition and at the same time enables us to give a strong account of art in terms of the unity of a practice. Such a practice has to be understood as exemplifying a specific form—but a form, that is not understood in a formalistic way. The form of art as a practice is rather something that develops in and through history.

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NOTES

1. My reading of Hegel is influenced by various—quite different—interpreters of his work, such as John McDowell, Michael Thompson, Robert Brandom, Terry Pinkard, Robert Pippin, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Slavoj Žižek. With respect to Hegel’s philosophy of art, I am mostly interested in its reception by Martin Heidegger, Theodor W. Adorno, and Arthur C. Danto. In addition to the *Lectures on Aesthetics* (Hegel 1988), I will also draw upon Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel 2004) and *Science of Logic* (Hegel 2010).
2. in this paper I present those thoughts in a rather thetic manner; for a more detailed elaboration on them also cf. Feige 2012 and Feige 2014.
3. Goodman 1985, Chapter VI.
4. Cf. Thompson 2008, Part 2.
5. For an influential reading of this alternative see also Pinkard 2002 and Pinkard 2012.
6. Cf. Hegel 2004, B and as a reading cf. Brandom 2007.
7. Cf. Gadamer 1989, 157ff.
8. Cf. Gadamer 1989, 340ff.
9. Also see Heidegger 2002—even if it can obviously integrate mechanical procedures as an aspect of its production and address and negotiate the meaning of algorithms. To interpret art as the practice of self-understanding thus means to understand experiences of works of art as performative transformations of ourselves.
10. Cf. Thompson 2008, Introduction; also see Boyle 2012.
11. Cf. Hegel 2007, 259ff.
12. Cf. Hegel 2004, CC.
13. Cf. Danto 1981.
14. For a non-standard account of aesthetic perception, see Shelley 2003.
15. Cf. Adorno 1984, 118ff.; Gadamer 1989, 277ff and part 3; and Davidson 1984.
16. Cf. Sellars 1997; also Hegel 2004, 58-66.
17. See also Bertram 2014, Chapter 3.
18. Again see Adorno 1984.
19. Cf. Adorno 1984, 147ff.
20. Thus Noël Carroll’s critique of Danto cannot be directed against Hegel; cf. Carroll 1999, Chapter 1.
21. Cf. Bubner 1989.
22. Seel 2013.
23. Cf. McDowell 1983.
24. See Gaut 2000.
25. Cf. Hegel 2010, Book two: The Doctrine of Essence.
26. Hegel 1988, Introduction.
27. Hegel 1988, Introduction.
28. Cf. Hegel 2004, DD; for a reading of the notion of absolute knowledge also cf. Pinkard 1996, 269ff. and Pippin 1989, Part III.
29. Cf. Carroll 1999, Chapter 5.
30. Cf. Früchtel 2013.
31. McDowell 1994.
32. Thompson 2008, Part 1.
33. Cf. Boyle 2012.
34. Thompson 2008, Introduction.
35. I read Hegel’s *Logic* to employ such a non-formalistic conception of form; cf. Hegel 2010.
36. For such an idea also cf. Gadamer 1989, 298ff, Danto 1964, Levinson 1979, Levinson 1993 and Feige 2014, Chapter 5.

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