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Tel.: + 386 1 470 64 70 – Fax: +386 1 425 77 92
E-Mail: fi@zrc-sazu.si – www.zrc-sazu.si/www/fi./FILVEST.HTM

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AESTHETICS: PHILOSOPHY OF ART OR PHILOSOPHY OF CULTURE?

ALEŠ ERJAVEC

Throughout its multifarious history aesthetics in its various historical, cultural and theoretical frameworks has been concerned with issues of cognition, beauty, nature and art, and their mutual relations and relationships. Hence, aesthetics, as established by Baumgarten, was intended to establish the science of cognition as carried out by the senses (although not in opposition to scientific rationality); in Kant the notions of the beautiful and the sublime simultaneously relate to nature and to art, both in relation to the preconditions of human cognition and understanding, while in Hegel aesthetics firmly becomes philosophy of art, although it still retains the umbilical cord with the sensuous, for, by being the "sensuous appearance of the Idea," by its very definition, art cannot exist without it. Although in Hegel art is an essential step in the development of the self-awareness of the Absolute Spirit, its specific sensuous features prevent it from attaining the ultimate position of the pure concept. This is reserved for philosophy, which deals, in Hegel's view, with concepts only.

Hegel's identification of aesthetics with philosophy of art and the turn away from nature to art as the fundamental object of aesthetic reflection represents a crucial historical moment, for it not only establishes aesthetics as philosophy of art but, consequently, also signals the demise of its relevance by eliminating the further historic importance of its subject, i.e. art.

As Peter Bürger notes in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, in Hegel can be found a sketch of a concept of postromantic art: "Using Dutch genre painting as his example, he writes that here the interest in the object turns into interest in the skill of presentation. 'What should enchant us is not the subject of the painting and its lifelikeness, but the pure appearance (*interesseloses Scheinen*) which is wholly without the sort of interest that the subject has. The one thing certain about beauty is, as it were, appearance [semblance (*Scheinen*)] for its own sake, and art is mastery in the portrayal of all the secrets of this ever

profounder pure appearance (*Scheinen*) of external realities' (vol. I, p. 598). What Hegel alludes to here is nothing other than what we called the developing autonomy of the aesthetic. He says expressly 'that the artist's subjective skill and his application of the means of artistic procedure are raised to the status of an objective matter in works of art' (vol. I, p. 599). This announces the shift of the form-content dialectic in favor of form, a development that characterizes the further course of art."[1] Bürger draws from this passage the conclusion that Hegel himself foresaw the separation of the content and the form, or what he calls "the antithesis between art and the praxis of life."[2]

There exists another interpretation of the Hegelian thesis of the intermediate position of art in relation to philosophy, which can be found in Henri Lefebvre and more recently in Luc Ferry and which relates to contemporary dilemmas intrinsic to aesthetics. According to this second interpretation of Hegel (the similarities of which with that of Bürger, and hence indirectly with that of Adorno, Ferry disputes) contemporary art has lost its power of negation. It follows from Ferry's theses that, because it turned into philosophy, art became sublated and by this act or process it was transformed into its opposite, although at the same time retaining its name as its empty shell. In the words of Ferry, "if art is simply an incarnation of a conceptual truth in a sensible material, art is dead."[3] The art that is referred to here is conceptual art in its broadest sense and it this art that increasingly appears as the art after modernism *par excellence*. It is also this art which is one of the causes for the present re-examination of the relation between art and culture and, therefore, of the relation between aesthetics as philosophy of art and aesthetics interpreted as philosophy of culture.

A dilemma which confronts us today is as follows: can we treat all contemporary art as a single entity, whether it is conceptual or other, or do we have to distinguish between (1) conceptual, (2) traditional (classical) art, and (3) predominantly commercial, commodified and, for the most part, visual art which is closely related to what used to be called mass and consumer culture? A step necessary for answering this dilemma may be in historically defining the initial object of our inquiry.

How can we define art historically? First, we may define it as a shifting function which gives a semblance of ontological stability simply because we don't view it from a long term historical perspective. From this viewpoint artworks are transient entities with ontological, cognitive, aesthetic, ideologi-

[1] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 93.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-4.

[3] Luc Ferry, *Le Sens du Beau* (Paris: Cercle d'Art, 1998), p. 200.

cal, and other functions, and artists and writers are appreciated and valued for a brief historical moment and then slip into oblivion to be, perhaps, resurrected years, decades or even centuries later. They may, in the meantime, become a part of the Canon, but even in this case it cannot be said that they are appreciated with the same intensity throughout history. The Czech structuralist aesthetician from the thirties, Jan Mukařovský furthermore suggested that each new artistic movement or trend – an avant-gardist, for example – first opposes and subverts the past artistic norms, but subsequently becomes itself a part of the tradition and hence itself a norm.

In this first historical definition, art is something that attains the function of art. Its essential feature could be defined in Nelson Goodman's manner: the question is not what is art, but when is it art? Mukařovský follows here in the footsteps of the Russian formalists, who have already claimed that artworks – they were concerned almost exclusively with poetry and prose and not with works of the visual arts – attained, lost and perhaps regained their artistic status through history. Or, quoting Danto from eight decades later, "We might define their historical moment as any time in which they could have been works of art."[4]

According to the second historical definition which is a historicist one, art follows a historically preexistent norm. In Hegel's case (and also, but to a lesser extent, in that of Heidegger) this is of course the Greek model. As Peter Szondi observes, "While in Hegel everything starts to move and everything has its specific place value in historical development ... the concept of art can hardly develop, for it bears the unique stamp of Greek art."[5] Romantic art does not fulfill those criteria and their ideal; to return to Bürger again, "For Hegel, romantic art is the product of the dissolution of the interpenetration of spirit and sensuousness (external appearance) characteristic of classical art. But beyond that, he conceives of a further stage where romantic art also dissolves. This is brought about by the radicalization of the opposites of inwardness and external reality that define romantic art. Art disintegrates into 'the subjective imitation of the given' (realism in detail) and 'subjective humor.' Hegel's aesthetic theory thus leads logically to the idea of the end of art where art is understood to be what Hegel meant by classicism, the perfect interpenetration of form and content."[6]

But does it necessarily follow that post-romantic art has lost the historic role it purportedly possessed in the past? While a positive answer is obligatory

[4] Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 196.

[5] Quoted in Bürger, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

[6] Bürger, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

if one follows Hegel's designation of the development of the Absolute Spirit, and may even be necessary if we follow Ferry's arguments, it is also true – as Adorno claims and, later, Bürger – that after romanticism, art, especially in the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century, attained or retained a very privileged social and existential position, one that was left practically undisputed at least until the sixties, when the emergence of structuralism and later poststructuralism started to radically question and attack the previously sancrosanct notions of the artwork, the artist and artistic creativity – a process which coincided with the change from the modernist into the postmodernist paradigm. Within such a changed culturescape the contemporary alternative to the two historical definitions previously described would be that of Arthur Danto: "The picture then is this: there is a kind of transhistorical essence in art, everywhere and always the same, but it only discloses itself through history. ... Once brought to the level of self-consciousness, this truth reveals itself as present in all the art that ever mattered."[7] This essence or truth cannot be identified with a particular style of art, continues Danto.

What is then disclosed through history is the historicized essence of art. And Danto continues much like Bürger and especially Ferry: "[T]he end of art consists in the coming to awareness of the true philosophical nature of art."[8] The passage of art into philosophy, the emergence of intellectual reflection upon art, purportedly signals the final death knell to art proper, but while in Ferry or Lefebvre art has not only lost its historic role but has lost its role altogether, Danto sees in this change the emergence of a post-historical art which, although no longer historic, legitimately continues the tradition of its predecessor and is therefore a continuation of art as such. A correlate of the previous belief in the importance and the essential truth-revealing function of art are the nineteenth and twentieth century beliefs in creativity of which art was the paramount instance. The view that the role of art may have been diminishing for centuries at least, is obvious also from Heidegger's question in 1950: "[I]s art still an essential and necessary way in which truth that is decisive for our historical existence happens, or is art no longer of this character?"[9]

This same issue was picked up in the recent book, *The Work of Art* from 1997, by the French aesthetician Gérard Genette, who noted that Adorno and Heidegger "systematically overvalued art,"[10] thereby echoing Danto's views on posthistorical art. Truly, may we not say that art is but yet another master

[7] Danto, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
[8] Danto, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
[9] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Artwork," quoted in Danto, p. 32.
[10] Gérard Genette, *L'oeuvre de l'art. La relation esthétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), p. 11.

narrative of modernity and that modernism was its last and perhaps paramount historical instance? In other words, that the dominant contemporary art has lost its privileged social, political, cognitive, even ethical role and that it has been transformed into its opposite, this opposite being the visual arts and, especially, their commodified postmodern version? The essential difference appears to occur with the demise of the modernist paradigm in art. This description is, I think, generally accepted, for there seem today to be no contemporary defenders either of modernity as an incomplete project or of interpretations of postmodernism as yet another facet or instance of high modernism, as was frequently argued in the eighties. If, then, postmodernism appeared as a relatively homogenous phenomenon, which with its firm and distinct features could persuasively stand up to modernism, the latter being exemplified by its distinct, exclusive and easily recognizable properties, then in the nineties and thereafter we seem no longer capable of affirming such distinct properties in postmodernism. In other words, the current postmodernism increasingly appears as a series of localized artistic and cultural phenomena, existing as a series of local and transient events with no particular claims to universality and historic importance. Hence Heidegger's observation about the possible reduced importance of art and Genette's comment about the overevaluation of art in Adorno and Heidegger correctly announce or diagnose the current status of art. Nonetheless, such diagnoses are possible on the background of a specific and outstanding historical situation of the previous century, i.e. that of modernism. As Fredric Jameson notes, echoing Adorno from his *Aesthetic Theory*, "Whatever the validity of Hegel's feelings about Romanticism, those currents which led on into what has come to be called modernism are thereby surely to be identified with one of the most remarkable flourishings of the arts in all of human history."[11] It is hence probably also from the vantage point of modernism that the current diminishment of the importance and the relevance of art appears to be stark enough to cause a series of authors – some of whom I have mentioned – to question the current status of art altogether. Moreover, since the avant-garde project of art has been separated from the general project of life and society as an art project, as two instances of the same utopian process (the consequences of which were described well in the case of the Russian avant-garde by Boris Groys in his *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin* book from 1988), what we are confronted with are the consequences of what Achille Bonito Oliva, Charles Jencks and Jameson have at an early stage, i.e. in 1972, 1975 and 1984 respectively, diag-

[11] Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn. Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 80-1.

nosed as trans-avant-garde, post-avant-garde and postmodernism. If, then, Duchamp's ready-mades appear today as an ever-recurrent issue of aesthetic and philosophical debates, this does not mean that this was the case also in the first half of the twentieth century when Duchamp was interpreted variously as a dadaist, a surrealist and a conceptualist. It was only when art created according to or resembling that made by him almost a century ago started to become the exclusive recognizable dominant trend of recent art that his work became an object of intense attention and was revealed as an early and paradigmatic instance of contemporary art. Marcel Duchamp has been instinctively resurrrected as the proto-postmodernist, for postmodernism consists, to quote an insightful observation by Slavoj Žižek, "in displaying the object directly, allowing it to make visible its own indifferent and arbitrary character. The same object can function successively as a disgusting reject and as a sublime, charismatic apparition: the difference, strictly structural, does not pertain to the 'effective properties' of the object, but only to its place in the symbolic order."[12] Doesn't this observation perfectly fit the history of the early ready-mades? Of the "Fountain," for example, which turned, but in this instance from a less than a memorable object, restricted mostly to public toilets, into one of the most discussed works of art of the second half of the previous century, with the issue of how many holes the original had becoming one of the highlights of the discussions and disputes of art historians and critics? Isn't it also true that Duchamp, since he was a predecessor of postmodernism at least in this respect, fitted only with difficulty into the designations assigned to him by twentieth century art theory?

In a recent article in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Péter György argued that "the end of art history [which György posits around 1984] also signified the logical collapse of the border between high art and not-high art, and is accompanied by the rendering senseless of the distancing of art from not art." Furthermore, "Inasmuch as the reality of essentialism and institutionalism can be ordered into periods, we can state that the dominance of essentialism and functionalism was appropriate for the history of art, for the centuries of the great narrative. That era lasted from Vasari to Gombrich, or Danto, we might say from the Renaissance to abstract expressionism. What happened afterwards and what is happening now is none other than the preparation for the dethronement of high culture."[13]

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[12] Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry. An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), p. 143.

[13] Péter György, "Between and After Essentialism and Institutionalism," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 57, no. 4 (Fall 1999), p. 431.

Doesn't this periodization coincide with the passage from modernism into postmodernism, namely, with the advent of the visible demise of modernism, and of theories of Lyotard, Zygmunt Bauman's analysis of the changed roles of legislators and interpreters, as well as Jameson's seminal essay from 1984 – implicitly supported also by theses by Lyotard and Baudrillard – on postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism? It is unnecessary to mention a series of publications diagnosing the visual turn in culture published since the late eighties, and it is this same visual culture, or rather the general and all-pervading ocularcentrism, that exemplifies much, if not all, of contemporary culture, or is, at least, its dominant feature. What we are predominantly experiencing then are basically two related but relatively distinct forms of contemporary art: the first is the conceptual one, the paradigmatic case of which is Duchamp, and the second consists of the visual arts with their continuation in a predominantly visual culture.

It was, I think, at this point that the issue of culture and hence of the philosophy of culture had, after three decades, reentered contemporary discussions about art. For a long time – certainly because of the cultural shock experienced, and so persuasively and influentially expressed by some of the authors of the Frankfurt School, be it at the time when they were still in Germany (and experienced American culture, whether jazz or Hollywood) or later, during the stay of some of them in the US (which obviously only confirmed their previous denigrating views), the profound critique of mass and consumer culture severely blocked – until the proliferation of the so-called postmodern theories – any totalizing philosophical attempts at its analysis from a positive vantage point. When these critical ideas were transposed back into Europe in the sixties and seventies they helped cause culture to become an object of sociological research, but only occasionally of philosophical investigation, except in their more ideological and political forms, where culture was treated (and often still is) as a set of ideological emanations of various class, gender or racial issues and conflicts. At the same time, i.e. in modernism and high modernism, culture also signified a social realm devoid of normative designations so frequent in relation to art, wherein much of the institutionalization of art took place via the inclusion of non-art into the realm of art, very much in accordance with Mukařovský's notion of the artistic norm.

It was thus the visual turn of the eighties, the rise of postmodern culture and its globalization as depicted and analyzed by numerous authors in the eighties and, earlier, in the seventies, also by Jean Baudrillard in his analyses of the sign and its economy, that offered first a critical and then a resigned analysis and assessment of postmodern culture, on the one hand, and a

euphorical one on the other, with culture as such now being approached in an increasingly neutral manner.[14]

In his book on Adorno, Martin Jay writes: "To speak of culture means immediately to be confronted by the basic tension between its anthropological and elitist meanings. For the former, which in Germany can be traced back at least to Herder, culture signifies a whole way of life: practices, rituals, institutions and material artifacts, as well as texts, ideas and images. For the latter, which developed in Germany as an adjunct of a personal inwardness contrasted with the superficiality of courtly manners, culture is identified with art, philosophy, literature, scholarship, theatre, etc., the allegedly 'humanizing pursuits' of the 'cultivated' man. As a surrogate for religion, whose importance was steadily eroding, it emerged in the nineteenth century as a repository of man's most noble accomplishments and highest values, often in tension with either 'popular' or 'folk' culture, as well as with the more material achievements of 'civilization'. Because of its undeniably hierarchical and elitist connotations, culture in this more restricted sense has often aroused hostility from populist or radical critics, who allege its natural complicity with social stratification."[15]

In most other European countries (one would want here to say "cultures") culture carries a similar meaning, with a more distant one being the French, wherein the notion is probably less frequently used than elsewhere. Hence, according to *Larousse*, the term "culture" relates to (1) the action of cultivating: "the culture of flowers," for example; (2) the unity or the whole "of acquired knowledge;" (3) the unity or the whole social, religious and other structures characterizing a certain society; (4) "mass culture;" (5) "physical culture;" and (6) a culture in a biological sense, such as that of microbes. Another usage, similarly distant from the usual sense of culture, but with a difference arising from an even more different historical background, is a Russian interpretation of culture, wherein culture is, as the Russian philosopher Mikhail Epstein stated some years ago, designed "to liberate a person from the very society in which he is doomed to live. Culture is not a product of society, but a challenge and alternative to society."[16] Culture is a parallel world, in which art is "more true," in the words of the contemporary Russian

[14] An outstanding example of symbolic commodification carried out by postmodernism is first the work and then the views of Jean Baudrillard, which started as an all-pervading critique of postmodern culture and in a single decade ended by being one of its main theoretical supports with him becoming one of its proponents.

[15] Martin Jay, *Adorno* (London: Fontana, 1984), p. 112.

[16] Mikhail Epstein, *After the Future* (Amherst: University of Mass. Press, 1995), p. 6.

painter Erik Bulatov, than real life. Culture thus offers a spiritual shelter from the mindless pursuits of everyday life and its chaos.

These different meanings of the term culture offer various inroads into the issue of a possible philosophy of culture. It is mostly the tradition of the Frankfurt School, combined with contemporary discussions of new technologies, alternative culture, postmodernism, postmodernity and, especially, contemporary visual culture, which are among the second group of reasons for present attempts to bring together philosophical aesthetics and the notion of culture. There is a certain antinomy in such an attempt, for culture was in the past either a normatively neutral term or, in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, often a negative one, for it was conceived as an opposite to the uncommodified avant-garde art. The views and theories of Walter Benjamin were in this regard exceptions which gained authority only when the tenets of Adorno or Marcuse became increasingly obsolete in relation to the recent developments in art and culture. The notion of culture appears to respond well to its recent neutral or at least non-normative notion, to "the dethronement of high culture," to use Péter György's phrasing, and to the implementation of the institutional or, to use Stephen Davies's terminology,[17] the "procedural" definition and theory of art as theoretically and practically the ruling definition, offering a philosophical framework in aesthetic discourse on art. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to assume that no other definitions and understandings, for example, following Davies again, the "functional definitions of art," exist any longer. The difficulty with the institutional or procedural definitions (and interpretations) of art today is that they disregard the historical changes that have occurred with the passage from modernism into postmodernism and treat art as if it was still functioning as it had in the time when modernism was vibrant and exclusive while, in fact, they mostly use as their examples conceptual art which often functions as Wittgenstein's language games. If, on the other hand, the social and existential functions of art have apparently substantially diminished due to a series of reasons (these being analyzed in the last few decades by Henri Lefebvre, Lyotard, Jameson, Andreas Huyssen, David Harvey, Zygmunt Bauman, and Gianni Vattimo, among others), then we may possess a good reason to ask whether in the present time the very object of such theories and of the ensuing definitions is not flawed at its very outset and does not – and cannot – authentically represent their pertinent reference point and the subject of its definition. Moreover, even if such attempts remain legitimate, meaning that art still basically functions as it did in the past (although perhaps not to the same extent, or

[17] Cf. Stephen Davies, *Definitions of Art* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

with the same intensity, or equally frequently) the problem still remains how to establish the relation of such art to culture in the sense of mass and consumer culture – which today applies predominantly to the visual culture and its hybrid forms, these ranging from dress codes, design, and the aestheticization of everyday life to the ensuing anaestheticization and its retroactive consequences. Contemporary art in most cases obviously no longer strives to be partisan, subversive and radical. Even if authors such as Terry Eagleton (in his *Ideology of the Aesthetic,* 1990) claim that postmodern art is both radical and conservative, most frequently its radical features are immediately commodified or carry and, especially, retain little weight if measured by their social consequences. Commodification is one of the essential common features of contemporary and past culture and of contemporary art and is the third cause for the question of how to relate the philosophy of art to a philosophy of culture so as to avoid separating these two realms of inquiry whose subjects increasingly appear to be merging or are revealing numerous similarities – for hasn't art, by losing or diminishing its truth-disclosing function, landed in the broad and normatively neutral realm of culture?

Modernist art tended to distance itself from culture: culture was ethnic, local, traditional or mass and consumer culture, while art was predominantly elitist (and a part of "high" culture), be it in the traditional modernist sense or the avant-garde one. One of its distinguishing characteristics was its subversive nature, be it in relation to previous art or to society, as well as its truth-disclosing role, defended by philosophers from Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger to Adorno, Merleau-Ponty and Althusser. It furthermore required an effort on the part of the audience to achieve aesthetic and artistic appreciation. Such modernist art is today often assimilated and integrated into the repository of cultural heritage and is modern in the Lyotard sense (as is the theory which supported it). One of the features of postmodern art and culture, related of course to their commodified nature, is their accessibility, their "user-friendly" nature which, on the one hand, allows both to be global and, on the other, to raise the question whether this is still art and not simply culture in its traditional commodified form. Such works are hence often hybrids between modernist art (from which they retain the notion of art) and culture under modernism (from which they have gained their accessibility and, therefore, what was then perceived as its commodified features). A paramount example of such art or culture is contemporary architecture, which is simultaneously artistic, aestheticized, market-oriented and represents a public space. It is therefore not surprising that the issue of postmodernism was first raised in architecture, in which the demarcation line between art and

culture is often extremely difficult to draw. In modern exhibition spaces the architectural environment often carries equal or similar importance to the works exhibited in it.

The reason why an attempt to designate aesthetics as philosophy of culture seems at first sight doomed to failure is that aesthetics, not only in its functionalist form, but also in its proceduralist or institutionalist variants, in spite of innumerable attempts to disrupt the institution or the realm of art, nonetheless contains an intrinsic normative feature. While contemporary art may be losing its real or imagined existential or truth disclosing function and value which it presumably possessed under modernism, the designation of "art" nonetheless at least potentially retains artifacts and other phenomena existing under such a designation within the unavoidably, i.e. by definition, normative realm of "art." To be an artist today often designates primarily one's self-designation and only secondly that of the audience. I may be an artist in my own eyes and for this I don't require confirmation from others – a feature which radically distinguishes a contemporary artist from a modernist one, who required at least the appreciation of a narrow circle of similarly inclined individuals. But, on the other hand, such a designation does not eliminate, negate or replace its normative implications.

So, how would aesthetics, in spite of the aforementioned possible reservation, be possible as a philosophy of culture? I shall conclude my paper by discussing two such attempts.

The first is that of Heinz Paetzold who has developed his views in a series of articles and books published since 1990. (I am thinking particularly of his *Ästhetik der neueren Moderne* from 1990 and his more recent book *The Symbolic Language of Culture, Fine Arts and Architecture* from 1997.) The essential arguments from these two books have been presented and updated in a recent article entitled "Aesthetics And/As Philosophy of Culture" and published in the 1999 volume of the *IAA Yearbook*. I shall thus limit my discussion of Paetzold's views to this essay.

Paetzold's intention is to develop a critical philosophy of culture. In his words, "This undertaking finds a historical backing in the stance of the earlier critical theory, on the one hand, and in the project of the philosophy of symbolic forms, on the other. I am arguing – continues Paetzold – in favor of a synthesis between these two strands which moved historically along separate routes."[18] What makes Paetzold's project of a philosophy of culture inter-

[18] Heinz Paetzold, "Aesthetics And/As Philosophy of Culture," *The IAA Yearbook*, vol. 3 (1999); <http://davinci.ntu.ac.uk/iaa/iaa3/aestheticsand.htm>, p. 1.

esting is the requirement for such a philosophy to be critical, for without this critical element it is difficult if not outright impossible to propose a persuasive philosophical project. What Paetzold then appropriates from Cassirer is his understanding of culture as a "process of man's progressive self-liberation." But, for this to be possible, in culture two sides have to be recognized: "All this leads me to the conclusion," states Paetzold, "that philosophy of human culture becomes a critical endeavor only to that extent that we grasp culture's two sides: Its hope giving promises and its thorough failures."[19] Secondly, argues Paetzold, "the philosophy of human culture has to deal with the plurality of symbolic forms in a nonhierarchical, pluralistic way. ... Dethroning scientific and technological rationality from being the foundational paradigm of culture does not mean to enthrone the arts and poetry in place of science as romanticism wanted to do."[20] Thirdly, the philosophy of human culture contains an answer to the question of what makes a cultured subjectivity. This includes bodily and somatic components which cannot be sublated into pure rationality.[21]

Among the early philosophers of culture Paetzold finds not only Herder and Georg Simmel, but also Vico, Rousseau, Croce and Collingwood, and places aesthetics within a critical philosophy of culture as a component of it,[22] wherein works of art exist as "symbolically significant expressions of culture."[23] He ends his essay by explicitly embracing a functional understanding of symbolic forms, art included.

While Paetzold's project of a critical philosophy of culture, a segment of which is also aesthetics as a philosophy of art, appears very promising, it lacks, for the time being at least, an analysis of the negative side, i.e. culture's failures. Without explaining this side, his project seems to fall under a similar category as the neopragmatist theories of Shusterman and Rorty that Paetzold criticizes for highlighting only the aesthetic dimension of contemporary culture, i.e. only one of its sides. Hence the project of a critical philosophy of culture remains for the time being incomplete.

Another, much better known recent project of a philosophy of culture, is that of Fredric Jameson, many of whose writings after the essay on postmodernism published in the *New Left Review* in 1984 were devoted to various aspects of not only postmodernism as the cultural dominant of the current late capitalism, i.e. its multinational form, but also to broader cultural

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[21] *Cf. ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
[22] *Cf. ibid.*, p. 8.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

issues, these being devoted to and supported by a variety of works ranging from films by David Lynch, contemporary poetry and postmodern architecture, to paintings by Andy Warhol and Hedeigger's analysis of a painting by van Gogh. In certain respects Jameson's analysis and critique of contemporary culture is similar to that discussed in Paetzold's project, although it rests not only upon the tradition of the Frankfurt School but especially that of Georg Lukács and partly on Lyotard and Baudrillard. In fact, most of Jameson's theory is surprisingly traditionalist, finding, with its totalizing tendencies, its proper historical place perhaps more in the first half or the middle of the previous century than at the outset of postmodernism. By stating this I in no way wish to diminish its importance and influence or insightfulness. On the contrary, I instead want to point out that such a totalizing stance obviously reveals, firstly, the contemporary need for such a viewpoint and the privileges it offers and, secondly, it avoids the shortcomings of regarding postmodernism as a complete break with the past which then prevents a serious historical comparative analysis. On the other hand, Jameson's frequent almost interchangeable use of the terms art and culture and his treatment of the former as an implicit extension and perhaps a relatively special case of the latter, avoids some of the pitfalls of the desire to establish a clear division between the two, implying a desire to collapse them into a single entity. The reason that Jameson's approach appears successful, be it in relation to realist, modernist or postmodernist art and culture, is in his implicit interpretation of art and culture as a vehicle for creating meaning, for creating a representation and self-representation of ourselves as social beings. Hence his requests addressed to authentic art and culture are requests for political and partisan views and articulations, for subversion of established norms and views – an interpretation that is highly successful when aimed at politically oriented works or an Adorno-type interpretation of art and its place in society, but which falls short when applied to acclaimed works of art which nonetheless show no covert or overt political intentions. This question is frequently raised by Jameson himself, as in the case of Warhol's works: "The question [is] why Andy Warhol's Coca-Cola bottles and Campbell's soup cans – so obviously representations of commodity or consumer fetishism – do not seem to function as critical or political statements?"[24] It is exactly this question that sets the limits to Jameson's endeavor to determine the function or functions of art in a uniform way. Yet, an apparent way out of this impasse is offered by the notion of "cognitive mapping," which is in fact, as Jameson himself admits, a

[24] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 158.

paraphrase of Lukacs's class consciousness. Put differently, the basic purpose or function of art – any art of any epoch – is to offer a cognitive mapping of oneself and of the society to which we belong, to disclose the truth of oneself within one's place and to offer coordinates which help us establish our here and now within a given social, historical and mental space. In 1984 and also in 1991 (when the essay was published in a book bearing the same title) he expressed his view that postmodernism hasn't developed sufficiently yet to allow for a cognitive mapping which would be not only the opposite of itself – schizophrenia, chaos, temporal displacement, etc. To our surprise this topic is later dropped – something that makes us wonder whether this happened because it was irrelevant or because in no instance an answer for it has yet been found. In other words, postmodernist art and culture seem to offer no clue as how to establish a cognitive mapping similar to that offered in modernism by modernist works as described and explained by Lukacs, Adorno and others. It thus appears as if Jameson accepts Lyotard's views from *The Postmodern Condition*, in the English Introduction to which Jameson offers no way out of what, for him, should be a failure, but which is, for Lyotard, exactly the central feature of postmodern art.[25]

The notion of cognitive mapping somewhat corresponds to ideas promoted by Heinz Paetzold, for cognitive mapping doesn't necessarily mean only a rational endeavor, but is, judging also from Jameson's Hegelian background, equally sensuous, representing in this way a case of symbolic forms. If this is true, a link between these various attempts to forge a philosophy of culture may be established, but we seem to be still a long way from a relatively consistent and theoretically persuasive philosophy of culture, although something of the kind appears, after half a century, to be again a necessity which will help us productively relate art and culture, but in a contemporary historical setting.

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[25] Cf. Fredric Jameson, "Introduction" in Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. xxiii-xxv.

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AESTHETICS, PHILOSOPHY OF CULTURE AND "THE AESTHETIC TURN"

LARS-OLOF ÅHLBERG

> Zweifellos erleben wir gegenwärtig einen Ästhetik-Boom. Er reicht von der individuellen Stilisierung über die Stadtgestaltung und die Ökonomie bis zur Theorie . . . zunehmend gilt uns die Wirklichkeit im ganzen als ästhetisches Konstrukt.
>
> –Wolfgang Welsch

> Aesthetics should be . . . rethought in such a way that it becomes embedded in a broader context within philosophy of human culture.
>
> –Heinz Paetzold

> A book advocating philosophy as the reasoned pursuit of aesthetic living cannot harbor an essential dualism between reason and aesthetics, reflected in an unbridgeable divide between the modern and postmodern.
>
> –Richard Shusterman

I

"Aesthetics is a chaotic field of inquiry which has had unusual difficulty defining and organizing itself. It is also one of the most fascinating and challenging branches of philosophy", says Kendall Walton in his review of Michael Kelly's *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics.*[1] Walton evidently thinks of aesthetics as *philosophical* aesthetics, or, as *philosophy* of art, but aesthetics can be understood in a much wider context – as it often is nowadays– as a general theory of art and aesthetic experience, as the theory of specific art forms, and

[1] Kendall Walton, Review of *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), *Times Literary Supplement*, September 29, 2000, p. 8.

as an integral part of the philosophy of culture. If philosophical aesthetics is a chaotic business, what then about aesthetics broadly conceived?

In this paper I propose to discuss some of the issues raised by Richard Shusterman and Wolfgang Welsch in their recent writings on the aims and purposes of aesthetics. Both philosophers advocate, with different emphasis and purpose, a reformation and transformation of aesthetics as an intellectual discipline, and they are both involved in the "aesthetic turn" in philosophy. I shall begin by sketching the background against which the current revival of interest in aesthetics occurs before discussing "the aesthetic turn" and in particular Shusterman's and Welsch's views.

II

Aesthetics as the systematic philosophy of art owes its existence, historically speaking, to the distinction between *aisthesis* sensory perception and experience) and *noesis* (reason and knowledge) in the classical philosophy of antiquity, the dichotomy between *aisthesis* and *noesis* dominating much subsequent Western philosophy and thought.

Aesthetics as a philosophical discipline, inaugurated by Alexander Baumgarten in the mid– 1750s but foreshadowed by Leibniz's reflections on the difference between clear and unclear ideas and sensations and their relationship to distinct (theoretical) ideas,[2] is paradoxically both a child of rationalism and the Enlightenment and at the same time a critique – albeit an implicit one – of an absolute, logistic rationalism, which does not grant cognitive value to *aisthesis*. Wolfgang Welsch rightly observes that Baumgarten conceived of aesthetics (i.e. philosophical aesthetics) as complementing and correcting a one-sided and arid rationalism.[3] Since the palmy days of the philosophy of art in the 19th century, when the philosophy of art was at the centre of the philosophical discussion and occupied such an important place in the philosophical systems of Hegel, Schelling and Schopenhauer,[4] aesthetics

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[2] Se Jeffrey Barnouw, "The Beginnings of 'Aesthetics' and the Leibnizian Conception of Sensation", *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, ed. Paul Mattick Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 52-95.

[3] "Baumgarten hat die Ästhetik als Korrekturdisziplin des einseitigen Rationalismus konzipiert und begründet" (Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, 4e Aufl., Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), p. 88.

[4] When aesthetics as the philosophy of art fell into disrepute during the last decades of the 19th century this was in large measure due to the overly speculative and "universalistic" character of Hegel's, Schelling's and Schopenhauer's metaphysics of art, which elicited

as the philosophy of art has been relegated to the outskirts of the philosophical landscape both in the phenomenological and the analytic traditions in philosophy during the first half of the 20th century.[5] During the 50s and the 60s, however, there is a renewed interest in the philosophy of art both in Continental philosophy ("continental" being an infelicitous geographical metaphor) and in analytic philosophy ("analytic" being an infelicitous chemical metaphor). Although ontology, epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of language and moral philosophy have dominated the philosophical scene, philosophical aesthetics conceived as the philosophy of art has gained a respected but subordinated position in general philosophy. This renewed interest in aesthetics is at least in part due to the "linguistic turn" in philosophy, which can be discerned both in phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions as well as in analytic ways of doing philosophy.

During the 1990s, however, aesthetics as the philosophy of art and as the reflection on aesthetic phenomena in general has become a major concern in many academic disciplines and interdisciplinary projects. A plethora of works in and on philosophical aesthetics published in recent years is a sign of the times, but also in several other disciplines such as cognitive science, the psychology of perception as well as in cultural studies the renewed interest in aesthetic questions is visible. In addition to Michael Kelly's *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (1998), the first modern encyclopedia of its kind, six introductory books by Anglo-American philosophers on aesthetics have been published within no less than three years: Gordon Graham's *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics* (1997), Dabney Townsend's *An Introduction to Aesthetics* (1997), George Dickie's *Introduction to Aesthetics: An Analytic Approach* (1997), Colin Lyas's *Aesthetics* (1997), James W. Mann's *Aesthetics* (1998), and Noël Carrolls *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction* (1999). All these works are more or less firmly situated within the analytic tradition, and display both the characteristic virtues and vices of analytic aesthetics, the exception being Colin Lyas's book, which is by far the most original and engaging. The works

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an anti-philosophical bias in the emerging empirical discipines of art history and the history of literature.

[5] Important and influential works in the philosophy of art have been written during this period as well, in particular by idealistically inclined philosophers such as Benedetto Croce (*Estetica come scienza dell' espressione e linguistica generale*, 1902) and R. G. Collingwood (*The Principles of Art*, 1938) and by philosophers transforming and transcending the idealistic tradition, Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (1923-9), John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1925), Susanne K. Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study of Symbolism in Reason, Rite, and Art* (1942) and *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from "Philosophy in a New Key"* (1953) should be mentioned as well as Roman Ingarden's *Das literarische Kunstwerk* (1931) and *Untersuchungen zur Ontologie der Kunst* (1965).

by these Anglo-Saxon writers represent a more or less analytic and ahistorical approach to aesthetics and the philosophy of art, whereas Brigitte Scheer's introductory work, *Einführung in die philosophische Ästhetik* (1997),[6] is more a work in conceptual history ("Begriffsgeschichte") or the history of philosophy than a systematic introduction to the philosophy of art. Scheer claims that aesthetics has enjoyed a remarkable renaissance in the past fifteen years or so, not only in an institutional, academic context, but rather as a potent ferment, affecting many philosophical disciplines. In her view, philosophical aesthetics today has primarily a critical function, relativizing the claims of ahistorical reason, attacking the central paradigm of Western philosophy, the traditional, logocentric conception of reason. Philosophical aesthetics, in her view, is an inter– and transdisciplinary endeavour, and is together with epistemology one of the fundamental philosophical disciplines. [7]

There are, to be sure, aestheticians and philosophers of art, seeking to avoid the two extremes of a determined anti-historical approach and a resolutely historicist approach – both of which seem to me to occlude important aspects of art and aesthetics. Theoreticians such as Luc Ferry, Gérard Genette and Jean-Marie Schaeffer in France, Oto Marquard, Wolfgang Welsch, Heinz Paetzold and Martin Seel in Germany exemplify the attempt to combine an historical approach to the problems of art and aesthetics with a more or less systematic and constructive perspective.[8] How the historical and the systematic/analytic should be related to one another is a moot question; and we may well ask whether historical considerations are always relevant to

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[6] *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, 4 vols., ed. Michael Kelly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Colin Lyas, *Aesthetics* (London: UCL Press, 1997), George Dickie, *Introduction to Aesthetics: An Analytic Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Dabney Townsend, *An Introduction to Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), Gordon Graham, *Philosophy of the Arts: An Introduction to Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 1997), James W. Manns, *Aesthetics* (Armonk, USA, 1998), Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Art: A Contemporary Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1999), Brigitte Scheer, *Einführung in die philosophische Ästhetik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997).

[7] Brigitte Scheer, *Einführung in die philosophische Ästhetik*, p. 1-5.

[8] See Luc Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age*, trans. Robert de Loaiza (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), Gérard Genette, *The Aesthetic Relation*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), Jean-Marie Schaeffer, *Art of the Modern Age: Philosophy of Art from Kant to Heidegger* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), Udo Marquard, *Aesthetica und Anaesthetica: Philosophische Überlegungen* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1989), Wolfgang Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990) and *Grenzgänge der Ästhetik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996), Jörg Zimmermann, Hrsg., *Ästhetik und Naturerfarhrung* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1996), Heinz Paetzold, *Die Realität der symbolischen Formen: Die Kulturphilosophie Ernst Cassirers im Kontext* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994), Martin Seel, *Ästhetik des Erscheinens* (München: Hanser, 2000).

philosophical analysis. In any case, there seems to be a growing awareness of the importance of historical and contextual approaches to philosophical problems, in particular to problems in the philosophy of culture and in aesthetics. When dealing with problems in aesthetics and the philosophy of culture a downright historicist approach dispensing with arguments, reducing philosophical questions to purely historical questions should be avoided, as should the other extreme, treating aesthetic and cultural concepts as if they possessed some internal ahistorical necessity thereby reducing philosophical questions to purely logical ones. Historical concepts have a logic and are amenable to conceptual analysis, logical concepts have a history and can be analysed from a historical perspective. Andrew Bowie's aspiration to avoid "the tendency towards merely 'monumental' history of ideas characteristic of some work in hermeneutics and the unconscious philosophical amnesia of much analytic philosophy" is certainly commendable.[9]

The revitalization and renewal of aesthetics is, however, not a purely academic matter, many theorists are convinced that contemporary aesthetics has, or, rather should, have a critical function in the larger culture as well; aesthetics is often conceived of as philosophy of culture and criticism of culture. As Michael Kelly says in the introduction to *The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*: "[A]esthetics is uniquely situated to serve as a meeting place for numerous academic disciplines and *cultural traditions* [my italics]", aesthetics is "the critical reflection on art, culture and nature",[10] and Brigitte Scheer claims that "philosophical aesthetics has experienced an extraordinary renaissance during the past fifteen years, not primarily as an institution, which keeps itself within its own disciplinary boundaries, but as a ferment penetrating and transforming almost all philosophical areas".[11] Philosophical aesthetics has above all a critical potential because philosophical aesthetics in her opinion "repudiates the central paradigm of Western philosophy, the traditional logocentric conception of rationality and the absolutification of that conception".[12] Whereas "the linguistic turn" carried with it a heightened consciousness of the linguistic character and language-dependent character of our world views,[13] it is today appropriate to speak of an "aesthetic turn", she claims,

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[9] Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1997), viii.

[10] Kelly, "Introduction", *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, xi.

[11] Scheer, *Einführung in die philosophische Ästhetik*, p. 1, my trans.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Scheer's characterization of the linguistic turn is somewhat inaccurate, for the linguistic turn involved above all a preoccupation with the structure of language, the relationship between word and world, and more generally the analysis of linguistic

because aesthetics takes the interpretative and constructive character of our sensations and perceptions of the world seriously.[14] In short, the aesthetic character of knowledge and experience in general is acknowledged in many quarters today, Scheer believes. Similar views are held by Wolfgang Welsch, who in his essay "Ästhetische Grundzüge im gegenwärtigen Denken" (1991), speaks of cognitive and epistemological aestheticization, the aestheticizing of knowledge and reality; in today's (post)modern world there is, he claims, a strong tendency, a tendency he apparently endorses, to view truth and reality as aesthetic phenomena – aesthetic in a wide sense of the term. In Welsch's view, constructivism is the dominant philosophy today, in stressing the constructedness of personal identity, of reality and of the world constructivism implies an aestheticization of truth, knowledge and reality.[15] Welsch argues in his essay "Ästhetik außerhalb der Ästhetik – Für eine neue Form der Disziplin" (1995) in favour of an "aesthetics outside of aesthetics", aesthetics as a multi-disciplinary "trans-aesthetics", which transcends the boundaries of traditional art centred philosophical aesthetics and occupies itself with the analysis and criticism of contemporary culture and theory. Since the aesthetic has invaded most, if not all, areas of life and culture in "our postmodern modern world", philosophy, and in particular philosophical aesthetics must follow suit, Welsch believes.

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meaning. See *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method*, ed. Richard Rorty (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1967). The term "linguistic turn" was, contrary to a widespeard opinion, not invented by Rorty, the logical positivist Gustav Bergmann seems to be the inventor of the expression "linguistic turn", by which he meant something else than Rorty, who adopted the term for the collection of essays *The Linguistic Turn* (See R. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982, xxi). The different "turns" in philosophy and cultural theory seem to have replaced the adaption of Kuhnian "paradigms" to the humanities; after "the epistemological turn" we have "the linguistic turn", "the interpretive turn" (Cf. *The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, Science, Culture*, eds. David R. Hiley, James F. Bohman, Richard Shusterman, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), and "the cultural turn" (Cf. *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, eds. Victoria E. Bonnell & Lynn Hunt, University of California Press, 1999).

[14] Scheer, *Einführung in die philosophische Ästhetik*, p. 3., my trans.

[15] Wolfgang Welsch, "Ästhetische Grundzüge im gegenwärtigen Denken", 1991, in W. Welsch, *Grenzgänge der Ästhetik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996), 62-105, trans. as *Undoing Aesthetics* (London: Sage, 1997). An important discussion of constructivism is found in John Searle's *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1995). Ian Hacking offers an interesting analysis of various forms of constructivism in his *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

III

What then does "aestheticization" mean, what are the implications of the "the aesthetic turn" for research in the cultural sciences, and what is the status of philosophical aesthetics after "the aesthetic turn"? Several answers suggest themselves, but before considering Richard Shusterman's and Wolfgang Welsch's views a few comments on the answers proposed by the Faculties of the Humanities and Social Sciences at Uppsala University in the "Joint Programme of Renewal for the Humanities". "The Aesthetic Turn", which forms part of the proposed programme in "Cultural Analysis and Contemporary Criticism", is described as follows:

> Within philosophical aesthetics today, a frequently used term is "the aesthetic turm", or in other words there is an increasing tendency to view the aesthetic dimension as primary and fundamental to the composition of our perceptions and experience of reality, a tendency that is for instance an outcome of the cultural upheaval in which we are living and which requires cultural analysis with a more aesthetically conditioned reflectiveness. This deepening and extension of the aesthetic dimension outside the traditional delimitations of art faces the aesthetic disciplines with new and vital research tasks.[16]

The main points can be summarized as follows: (1) the aesthetic dimension is often taken as primary as regards our perception and apprehension of reality, (2) this alleged tendency in contemporary thought is the result of recent cultural changes (the transition form modernity to postmodernity?), (3) the aesthetic disciplines including philosophical aesthetics should broaden their horizons so as to include aesthetic phenomena outside the arts in their purview. The first claim is certainly true, the aesthetic dimension is taken as primary by many leading philosophers and cultural analysts today, but whether they are justified in doing so is a moot question, therefore the second claim that "cultural analysis with a more aesthetically conditioned reflectiveness" is required in order to understand contemporary culture (and art?) seems to me more doubtful. The third claim is unexceptional if it is interpreted as an exhortation to analyse the diversity of aesthetic phenomena (and aesthetic aspects of diverse cultural phenomena) in contemporary society, which to my mind also includes a sharpened awareness of the complexity of the notion of the aesthetic, or, rather, of the different and heterogeneous notions of the aesthetic at play in the discourse of "the aesthetic turn".

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[16] Uppsala University, "Humanities and Social Sciences", Proposal 2000-12-15, p. 23.

The background of "the aesthetic turn" and the tasks lying ahead for aesthetics (broadly conceived) are clarified in the following passage:

> There has been a renewed interest in aesthetics during the past few decades, both philosophical aesthetics and aesthetic analysis in the wider sense, largely due to the critical discussions surrounding postmodern theory (philosophy, aesthetics, cultural analysis) and postmodern art, literature, and architecture. The aestheticization of morality and lifestyle is often said to be a characteristic feature of contemporary culture. While traditional aesthetic theory often displayed little or no interest in cultural spheres outside of high culture, and therewith limited its purview to fine art and belles lettre, contemporary aesthetics has broadened its scope to encompass everyday life and popular culture as well. This means that the very notion of the "aesthetic" is undergoing a transformation: from having been a relatively well-defined concept, it has become a more variegated and chaotic notion, reflecting the complex reality which is its object of study.[17]

Here "the aesthetic turn" is explicitly associated with postmodernism and postmodern theory. Whereas the observation that traditional aesthetic theory (probably philosophical aesthetics is meant) has paid little or no interest to aesthetic phenomena outside of high art and culture is certainly correct the claim that "contemporary aesthetics" nowadays includes into its purview "everyday life and popular culture as well" is almost as certainly an exaggeration. In the first place this characterization applies to some, perhaps many, contemporary aestheticians, (notably Shusterman and Welsch), but – for better or worse– not to all or even most philosophical aestheticians. In the second place we should note that "everyday life and popular culture" has for a long time caught the interest of researchers in various disciplines dealing with aesthetic phenomena (sociology of culture, sociology of art and literature). Therefore it is a moot question whether the notion of "the aesthetic" has undergone, or, is undergoing a transformation. In fact, one issue of fundamental importance is what is meant by "the aesthetic" and "aesthetics" by the champions of "the aesthetic turn", and last but not least , what could and what should be meant by these notions. Nor am I so sure that "the aesthetic", has been "a relatively well-defined concept" in the traditional discourse of philosophical aesthetics and the aesthetic disciplines; it seems to me that "the aesthetic turn" trades partly on the etymologically speaking original meaning of "the aesthetic" as "what pertains to sensations and perceptions and the sensuous enjoyment of sensuous and perceptual qualities".

[17] Ibid., pp. 24–5.

I am inclined to think that much of the impetus of "the aesthetic turn" derives from privileging one aspect of the traditional meaning of "the aesthetic", or, one use of the notion of "the aesthetic" at the expense of others, and granting "the aesthetic" in the sense of "sensuous qualities", "what pertains to (pleasurable) sensations and perceptions", pride of place. One aspect of "the aesthetic" has become dominant in "the aesthetic turn" at the expense of others, and in particular, at the expense of "the artistic". The claim that "the aesthetic turn" owes much to postmodern theory and postmodernism (as well as postmodernity) is, I believe correct, therefore many interesting and exciting tasks await the philosophical aesthetician and cultural analyst, for, postmodern theory and postmodernism in the arts and in the culture at large is a very mixed bag.[18] We need to ask ourselves which postmodern theories and ideas have influenced and determined the nature and shape of "the aesthetic turn". Needless to say, our attitude towards "the aesthetic turn" is conditioned by our views on postmodern theory and postmodernism in general.[19]

Lest my remarks concerning the proposal for the renewal of the humanities at Uppsala University be misunderstood, I hasten to add that the proposal to explore "the aesthetic turn" is, in my view, very timely and amply justified, but "the aesthetic turn" should not simply be taken for granted, nor, should the nature and extent of "the aesthetic turn" be taken as unproblematically given; in short "the aesthetic turn" should be subjected to a critical analysis from various points of views (philosophical, art historical, sociological), something that is certainly not excluded by the wording of the document. My own view is that there is indeed – for better or worse – a widespread aestheticization of many aspects of contemporary everyday life and mass culture (as well as of theory), but "hedonistic consumerism" is in many contexts perhaps a more appropriate label for what is called "aestheticization". I also believe that it is important for the cultural sciences including philosophical aesthetics and the philosophy and sociology of culture to confront "the state of culture" critically. When it comes to the

[18] We should also note that, according to some analysts, postmodernity and postmodernism are already passé. The architectural historian and critic Philip Jodidio, for example, asserts that "it is clear that the time of the Post-Modern is gone" (Philip Jodidio, *Contemporary European Architecture*, vol. IV, Köln: Taschen, 1996, p. 6).

[19] Who is the paradigmatic postmodern theorist? Foucault, Baudrillard, Derrida, Lyotard, or Rorty? Although only Lyotard and Rorty (at a time) accepted the label "postmodernist", all thinkers mentioned are habitually regarded as crown witnesses for postmodernism. But there are fundamental and irreducible differences between the "postmodernism" of a Foucault and a Derrida and a Baudrillard, consequently the implications for "the aesthetic turn" differ widely depending on which theorist we regard as typical of "the postmodern turn".

aestheticization of theory, and the claims that knowledge and reality have been "aestheticized" I am not so sure that this is what actually has happened across the board, moreover I part company with those who applaud the aestheticization of morals, theory, reality and what not. I shall offer some arguments for my position in the sequel, but now that the cat is out of the bag, I turn to the views of Richard Shusterman and Wolfgang Welsch, perhaps the most influential proponents of "the aesthetic turn".

IV

"The project of modernity (with its Enlightenment roots and rationalizing differentiation of cultural spheres) has been identified with reason", says Richard Shusterman in his recent work, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (1997).[20] The postmodern, he continues, is "contrastingly characterized as dominantly aesthetic".[21] Now, both Shusterman and Welsch are prone to contrasting the modern and the postmodern in this rather cavalier way, but although there clearly is something in this contrasting characterization of the modern and the postmodern, I think we should be wary of such snappy and formulaic descriptions of something as vast, polymorphic and heterogeneous as modernity and postmodernity. In spite of the fact that Shusterman warns us against taking these terms ("the modern" and "the postmodern") "as denoting dichotomous, inimical essences",[22] he characterizes Habermas as "championing the claims of reason and modernity", and Rorty as "representing the aesthetic and postmodern".[23] Although I think Shusterman has the aestheticization of morals and life-styles in mind (perhaps world views and reality as well) when he speaks of the postmodern as largely aesthetic, he apparently also believes that postmodern theory is in some sense "aesthetic", or, more aesthetic than traditional, modern theory, since aesthetic aspects enter into all or most kinds of theorizing according to him. Postmodernism has taken an aesthetic turn, says Shusterman, thinking of the (aesthetically inspired?) critique of reason, and above all, of the "the postmodern implosion of aesthetics into ethics and politics".[24] What does the "implosion of aesthetics into ethics and politics" actually mean? One thing it

[20] Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 113.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 114.

[24] Ibid., p. 127.

doesn't mean, I suggest, is that "ethics and aesthetics are one", as Shusterman implies in quoting Wittgenstein.[25] Wittgenstein's "parenthetical phrase", he claims, is "today so meaningful", because it "gives pointed expression to important insights and problems of both aesthetic and ethical theorizing in our postmodern age".[26] According to Shusterman, Wittgenstein "denies modernism's aesthetic ideology of artistic purism" and "implies that such isolationist ideology is no longer viable now that the traditional compartmentalization of knowledge and culture threatens to disintegrate into manifold forms of interdisciplinary activity".[27] Shusterman is, of course, aware of the context in which Wittgenstein's remark (proposition 6.421 in *Tractatus*) occurs, a remark expressed "in that austere economy of pregnant minimalist expression so characteristic of the modernist style",[28] as he puts it. Shusterman knows that for the early Wittgenstein ethics as well as aesthetics (as expressions of value) involve seeing things *sub specie aeternitatis*, that ethics and aesthetics are transcendental and concern the realm of the mystical, a conviction that is – mildly put– uncongenial to a postmodernist.[29] Therefore Shusterman's claim that "Wittgenstein's ambiguous dictum that ethics and aesthetics are one by erecting the aesthetic as the proper ethical ideal"[30] supports the postmodern "aestheticization of the ethical" is surprising. It may be the case that the postmodern conviction "that aesthetic considerations are or should be crucial and ultimately perhaps paramount in determining how we choose to lead or shape our lives" is widespread,[31] but it is certainly not Wittgenstein's idea nor is it an idea we should accept lightheartedly.[32]

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[25] Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 236-7.

[26] Ibid., p. 237.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., p. 236. Wittgenstein's proposition 6.421 reads: "It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words. Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same)" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1921, trans. D.F. Pears & B. F. McGuiness, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), the original German parenthetical sentence being: "(Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins)".

[29] According to Hans-Johann Glock Wittgenstein's "sibylline pronouncement" involves the following points: (1) ethics and aesthetics are concerned with necessities, which by their very nature cannot be expressed in meaningful propositions, but only shown, (2) ethics and aesthetics constitute a higher, transcendetal realm of value, and (3) ethics and aesthetics are based on a mystical experience (Hans-Johann Glock, *A Wittgenstein Dictionary*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p. 31).

[30] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 237.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Cf. Joseph Margolis' remarks about Shusterman's use of Wittgenstein's dictum (J. Margolis, "All the Turns in 'Aestheticizing' Life", *Filozofski Vestnik* 1999:2, "Aesthetics as

But what exactly is involved in "the aestheticization of the ethical", and what does "aesthetic" mean here? Shusterman offers the following clues. The aestheticization of the ethical, he says, is "perhaps more evident in our everyday lives and the popular imagination of our culture than in academic philosophy",[33] this aestheticization being manifested "by our culture's preoccupation with glamour and gratification, with personal appearance and enrichment".[34] This, Shusterman says, is "the postmodernist ethics of taste", whose most influential philosophical advocate is Richard Rorty. Rorty favours "the aesthetic life", which among other things implies the ideal of private perfection, self creation and a life motivated by "the desire to embrace more and more possibilities",[35] and the "aesthetic search for novel experiences and for novel language" [novel languages being ways of defining oneself in novel ways].[36] The "ethics of taste", Shusterman argues, is a consequence (though not a logical consequence) of anti-essentialism regarding human nature. If the absence of a human essence, Shusterman says, implies no determinate ethic, it cannot imply an aestheticized ethic either, but "it still can lead to an ethics of taste, since in the absence of any intrinsic foundation to justify an ethic," Shusterman continues, "we may reasonably be encouraged to choose the one that most appeals to us".[37] The appeal of an ethic, he believes, is ultimately an aesthetic matter, "a question of what strikes us as most attractive or most perfect".[38] It is important to note that Shusterman, following Bernard Williams, makes a distinction between ethics and morality, ethics being mainly concerned with values and the good life and morality with obligation.[39] Bearing this distinction in mind Shusterman's view that the aestheticization of ethics is a good thing becomes perhaps less objectionable, but what about moral obligations? Can moral obligations also be "aestheticized" and conceived of in terms of taste, choice and appeal? Shusterman seems to think so, for, he

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Philosophy", Proceedings of the XIVth International Congress of Aesthetics 1998, Part I, Ljubljana 1999, p. 199).

[33] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 238.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Richard Rorty, "Freud and Moral Reflection", in *Freud: The Moral Disposition of Psychoanalysis*, eds. J. H. Smith & W. Kerrigan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) p. 11.

[36] Ibid., p. 15.

[37] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 243.

[38] Ibid.

[39] "Ethics, as distinguished from morality, recognizes that there is more to the good life than the fulfilment of obligations", says Shusterman (ibid., p. 245). According to Williams "morality [is] a special system, a particular variety of ethical thought" (Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, London: Fontana/Collins, 1985, p. 174).

argues that "[f]inding what is right becomes a matter of finding the most fitting and appealing gestalt, of perceiving the most attractive and harmonious constellation of various and weighted features in a given situation or life".[40] Finding what is right is, Shusterman claims, "no longer the deduction of one obligation from another more general obligation [. . .], nor is it the outcome of a logical calculation based on a clear hierarchical order of obligations".[41] Therefore, Shusterman concludes, "ethical justification comes to resemble aesthetic explanation in appealing not to syllogism or algorithm but to perceptually persuasive argument [. . .] in its attempt to convince".[42] Two comments are in order: first, Shusterman almost imperceptibly switches from "moral" (in moral obligation) to "ethical" (in ethical justification), but he presumably means that moral deliberation, finding out what our obligations are in a certain situation, is rather like aesthetic explanation and justification; second, he speaks of ethical justification, as resembling aesthetic explanation "in its attempt to convince". This seems to be a rather strange "disembodied" view of moral obligation, for even if it is the case that we sometimes are called upon to justify our actions from a moral point of view and although it is also true that we sometimes feel the need to justify our actions and the actions of others and that therefore the purpose of offering justifications is to convince (ourselves or others), this is by no means always the case when trying to find out what course of action to take and when asking ourselves (or others) what our moral obligations are. Moral obligations are invoked not only in order to justify a certain course of action, or to convince somebody of the right course of action. Finding out (by whatever means – deliberation, intuition, spontaneous feeling) what our moral obligations are in a given situation leads normally to action; moral obligations are action-guiding. The main purpose of finding out what our moral obligations are is not to justify an action or to attempt to convince somebody of the rightness of the action in question, but simply to do the right thing. Shusterman's view of moral obligations seems to me to be strangely contemplative and "intellectualised". When Shusterman says that "[f]inding what is right becomes a matter of finding the most fitting and appealing gestalt" he has, I think, either pronounced a tautology or actually left the universe of discourse of ethics and morality behind. For we may well ask about the most fitting and appealing gestalt, "fitting and appealing from what point of view"? Fitting or appealing from a moral point of view or from an aesthetic point of view? If the answer is "from a moral point of view"

[40] Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, p. 245.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

we are dealing with a tautology, if the answer is "from an aesthetic point of view" we have, I suggest, not so much aestheticized ethics and morality, but abandoned ethics and morality altogether. Applying aesthetic considerations and standards of the kind envisaged by Shusterman (and Rorty) to ethics and morality means that questions of right and wrong, of justice and equality, should be answered by invoking "taste", "appeal" and "liking" instead of by appealing to norms and standards (however changeable, heterogeneous and flexible). Shusterman's view implies to my mind the denial of the rationality of ethics and morality and moral deliberation, and the dissolution of ethics and morality as guides to action. The aestheticization of ethics and morals is, in my view, not a new ethics or morality, but a new a-morality (I am not saying immorality). In spite of this, and somewhat paradoxically, Shusterman can be seen to advocate a new ethics and a new morality. For all his anti-essentialism and anti-foundationalism Shusterman seems to think that his anti-essentialism and anti-foundationalism provides some kind of justification for a new ethics and morality, for an aestheticized ethics and morality. Shusterman's views are therefore reminiscent of earlier endeavours to find a "justification" for ethics and morality. But "to propose a new justification [for morality] would be to inaugurate a new practice",[43] as Paul Johnston has argued convincingly to my mind. If the proposed practice ("the aestheticization of ethics") differs in fundamental respects from what has hitherto been considered to be ethics and morality we are justified in regarding the new practice as a new a-morality. Shusterman may be right in maintaining that in these postmodern times aesthetic consideration play a fundamental role in "choosing" life-styles and values and in deciding what the proper and right action is in given circumstances. But if we applaud this state of affairs, as Shusterman does, have we not discarded ethics and morality altogether, or, rather, accepted a playful hedonism – some would say nihilism – as the guiding principle of life and action?[44]

I have said that Shusterman's idea of the aestheticization of ethics is less objectionable than his analysis of morality, because it is obvious that there are many conflicting versions and visions of the good life in contemporary society, and it seems that we have no "neutral" criteria by which different versions of the good life could be judged. Nevertheless, something more can be said about the supposedly arbitrary and "aesthetic" choices people make regarding

[43] Paul Johnston, *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 69.

[44] Paul Johnston's remarks about Bernard William's "justification" of morality apply in this case too: "Central moral concepts such as justice, integrity, and guilt are marginalized or rendered opaque, while the very notion of obligation comes to seem highly problematic" (Johnston, *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy*, p. 73).

the good life in these postmodern times. In the first place, Shusterman like Rorty and Welsch exaggerates the extent to which we are able to choose a life-style and an ethic. Economic, social, cultural and psychological realities impose, I suggest, robust limitations to what life-styles, and which ethics are open to us. Nor should it be forgotten that the choices open to us and the choices we actually make may be – to a larger extent than we realize – conditioned by factors beyond our control. The aestheticization of ethics seems to appeal mainly to liberally minded postmodern philosophers and intellectuals and reflects perhaps also the predicament of many "ordinary" middle-class persons in affluent societies, but large sections of the population in affluent societies, not to mention poor societies, have a much more restricted range of "choices" of life-style and ethics. [45] I also believe that something more than just aesthetic appeal enters, and should enter our ethical deliberations, our thinking about the good life. Consider the following example. I suppose racist and sexist values and attitudes can be part of an ethic, i.e. of a conception of the good life. If we accept the aestheticization of ethics, it seems that the only thing that can be said about this ethic is that we dislike it, that it does not appeal to us. But racist and sexist values are not free-floating phenomena, they have a history and they fit into certain social, economic, cultural and psychological patterns. These values are, for those, who embrace them and live by them not something they just find appealing, many racists, perhaps most actually believe that it is a scientific truth that non-whites are mentally and morally inferior to whites. Since this view is a delusion, a racist ethic can be rejected, not just on aesthetic grounds, not just because we dislike it, but on rational grounds.[46] Even if aesthetic considerations may enter our deliberations about the good life, I think, Shusterman and company play down the role of reason and argument in ethics.

V

In the wake of "the aesthetic turn", Wolfgang Welsch envisages aesthetics as a new "prima philosophia". Modern epistemology, Welsch claims, has been continuously "aestheticized" since Kant. There is, he says, "a fundamental aestheticization of knowledge, truth and reality".[47] Aesthetic categories such

[45] See, for example, Zygmunt Bauman's *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).

[46] Even if arguments are unlikely to convert racists to a more humane and tolerant ethic it remains true that racism is not only distasteful, but also irrational.

[47] Welsch, *Grenzgänge der Ästhetik*, p. 96, my trans.

as appearance or fictionality ("Schein"), mobility ("Beweglichkeit"), groundlessness ("Bodenlosigkeit") and uncertainty ("Schweben") have, according to Welsch, replaced "the classical ontological categories of being, reality, permanence".[48] But it is in the first place far from clear, whether the "classical" categories have in fact been replaced by the categories of appearance, mobility and uncertainty, and in the second place I fail to see what is specifically *aesthetic* about these latter categories. In any case Welsch's contention that "our 'first philosophy' has to a significant degree become aesthetic",[49] seems to me to be based on a confusion. Although aesthetics is regarded a new "first philosophy", it is a first philosophy of an entirely different kind from the "first philosophy" of, say, Descartes or Kant, that is to say, not a first philosophy at all, for aesthetics as a "first philosophy" implies, according to Welsch, that, in fact, there are no foundations, and aesthetics is not a new "foundational" philosophy or science: "Aesthetics [. . .] does not offer a foundation".[50] The very absence of a foundation, Welsch contends, characterizes the aesthetic turn, and constitutes a paradigm shift. Welsch's use of the Kuhnian term "paradigm" incidentally reveals the affinity between the discourse of "turns" and the discourse of "paradigms" – and the problems with both. Welsch's use of "paradigm" in this context, seems to me to be one among thousands of examples of misusing an vulgarizing the Kuhnian conception of paradigms and paradigm shifts.[51] Welsch detects the signs of aestheticization everywhere in contemporary theorizing, in philosophy as well as in the sciences: "The insight that reality is aesthetically constituted is not only shared by many aestheticians, but is a view held by all thinking theorists of science and reality in the 20th century".[52] In order to support this rather extraordinary claim (those who do not understand, let alone accept, the claim that reality is aesthetically constituted are apparently unthinking reactionaries) Welsch appeals to Nietzsche and refers to his influence on contemporary thinking. Even those, who are not Nietzscheans, he claims, are forced to argue

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[48] Ibid., p. 71, my trans.

[49] Ibid., p. 96, my trans.

[50] Ibid., p. 97, my trans.

[51] In the postscript (1969) to *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* Kuhn says that there are "two very different usages of the term [paradigm]" in the original text, viz. paradigms as the constellation of group commitments, which means that there is a "disciplinary matrix", which is shared by "the practicioners of a particular discipline", and paradigms as shared examples (Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,*1962, 2nd. ed., University of Chicago Press, 1970, pp. 182, 187). No cultural analyst or social scientist has to my knowledge spoken of "disciplinary matrixes" or "shared examples", perhaps because there aren't any in the human and the social sciences.

[52] Ibid., p. 85, my trans.

like Nietzsche when the fundamental problems in the philosophy of science are discussed, and Welsch quotes Karl Popper's well-known view that all our knowledge is uncertain and changeable.[53] If Nietzsche said that all knowledge is uncertain and if Popper said that all knowledge is uncertain, that certainly does not mean that Popper argued in the same way as Nietzsche, nor that Popper implicitly admitted that the "fundaments" of knowledge and reality are in some sense aesthetic. We find a similar *non sequitur* in Welsch's discussion of Rorty's *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* and in his comments on the work of some prominent physicists. Rorty showed, in Welsch's opinion, that "all our 'fundaments' are aesthetically constituted, in that they are throughout cultural artefacts".[54] It is, according to Welsch, common knowledge that physicists such as Bohr, Dirac, Einstein and Heisenberg realized that their theories were not representations of reality, but rather productions. They were, moreover, aware, Welsch says, that imagination is indispensable for succesful scientific research. Now Rorty's conception of knowledge and reality as presented in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, is certainly non-foundational, constructivist and pragmatist. But why should we say that all our fundaments are aesthetically constituted because they are cultural artefacts? Most, perhaps all aesthetic phenomena are cultural artefacts and if knowledge and reality are cultural artefacts, they are also cultural artefacts, but from that fact (if it is a fact) it does not follow that knowledge and reality are aesthetically constituted. Welsch is here conflating the notions of "aesthetically constituted" and "culturally constituted". His case is equally weak in regard to the famous physicists he adduces as evidence for the importance of aesthetic consideration in scientific theorizing. For, even if imagination enters scienfic research (it does), and even if aesthetic considerations play a role in scientific theorizing (they do), there is no reason to conclude that Bohr and company used aesthetic arguments in solving crucial theoretical problems. Welsch's statement that the mathematician and philosopher Poincaré believed aesthetic skills to be more important than logical ones in matehmatics is equally misguided, for in the passage quoted by Welsch, Poincaré says no such thing; aesthetic consideration, says Poincaré, play a great role in mathematics, and he emphasizes that mathematicians need imagination, a special "mathematical imagination".[55] This, I suggest, has very little to do with the aesthetic turn and the aestheticization of knowledge and reality. The truth is that we can detect aesthetic aspects everywhere (even in art), we can view things *sub specie*

[53] Ibid., p. 85.
[54] Ibid., p. 87.
[55] Ibid., p. 92, footnote 72.

aestheticae, but that does not make everything aesthetic except by an illicit conceptual manoeuvre.

Welsch is on firmer ground (!) when he analyzes the aestheticization of life-styles, ethics and everyday life. Aesthetic processes, he contends, are not only of decisive importance in the new media, aesthetic (in the sense of "virtual") processes create a mediated reality, or, rather, an imaginary room, where the distinction between real and unreal seems to vanish. Welsch detects a different form of aestheticization in the stylization of subjects and life-styles, that may ultimately lead to the *homo aesteticus.* All life forms, all approaches to reality and to ethical norms, Welsch claims, have assumed "a peculiar aesthetic quality". Welsch is here referring to what I have earlier called "hedonistic consumerism". The criteria for choosing between different moralities, he thinks, cannot be but aesthetic. In discussing Shusterman I have argued that talk of choosing life styles and ethics is somewhat exaggerated; I quite fail to see how anyone actually chooses a life style or an ethic in the way one chooses a shirt or a cake (not that choosing a shirt or a cake is an entirely arbirtrary matter). There is, to be sure, an element of choice and arbritration in reflecting on ethics and morality, but I do not believe that we can choose a life style or a morality at will. There are, I think, profound psychologically, socially and culturally determined limits to what we can conceivable choose, believe and do.

I have argued that Welsch's aestheticization rests, at least in part, on conceptual confusion and conflation. Welsch, however, claims that those who find the aestheticization of everyday life etc. distasteful often avail themselves of a cheap conceptual trick and argue that aesthetics by definition deals only with art. The opponents of aestheticization theories are in Welsch's opinion therefore guilty of an illicit conceptual move. This attitude, Welsch continues, is escapistic, and does not enhance our philosophical understanding of contemporary reality.[56] In response to Welsch's charge I admit that I dislike some of the effects of the aestheticization of everyday life (as does Welsch). But that is surely beside the point. In arguing that most of the phenomena Welsch regards as the effects of aestheticization I am not saying that these aspects of contemporary life should be ignored, nor that they shouldn't be studied by philosophers. They fall, however, more naturally within the domain of a general philosophy and sociology of culture than within aesthetics. I see no point in broadening the concept of the aesthetic and aesthetics to such an extent that almost everything from science, philosophy, ethics, morals, life styles, the products of the entertainment industries, etc. are regarded as aesthetic phenomena to be studies in the new discipline of trans-aesthetics. It

[56] Ibid., p. 20.

is indeed remarkable that almost everything, except art, seems to be included in the aestheticization of reality, and thus a fit subject for the new "trans-aesthetics".

In his contribution to the International Congress of Aesthetics in Ljubljana in 1998 Wolfgang Welsch presents what he regards as a case study of the aestheticization of the everday. Contemporary sport, according to Welsch, "obviously represents a striking example of today's aestheticization of the everyday".[57] There is a shift Welsch maintains in todays's sport "from an ethical to an aesthetic perspective" on health.[58] Today's sport, he believes, has "turned into a celebration of the body",[59] the older "modern" practice of sport presumably being something else, mortifying the body, for example, or forcing the body to perform beyond all reasonable limits. "This novel type of training", Welsch maintains, "respects the body and does away with the old ideology of mastering the body",[60] and Welsch quotes the Finnish world champion in cross-country skiing Mika Myllylä as saying that "the greatest enjoyment comes from training, not from winning".[61] Had Welsch quoted Myllylä as an example of a new "aestheticized" attitude to sport if he had finished seventh or fifty-seventh in the world chamionships in Ramsau in 1999,[62] had he quoted him as an example of "a new care for the body" if he had known that Myllylä would be caught using perfomance enhancing drugs during the world championships in cross-country skiing in Lahti in February 2001? The fact that the Finnish skier, whom Welsch regards as a shining example of a new "postmodern" aestheticized approach to sport, was caught cheating, is not only ironic, but casts a rather lurid light on postmodern aestheticization processes. The distinction between reality and appearance is more important– both ontologically and morally than Welsch is prepared to admit.

VI

Although the discourse of "aestheticization" and the "aestheticization of theory, reality and ethics" is a relatively new (and contemporary) phenomenon, it is not without precedents. The concepts of the aesthetic, of

[57] Wolfgang Welsch, "Sport – Viewed Aesthetically, and Even as Art?", *Filozofski Vestnik* 1999:2, "Aesthetics as Philosophy", Proceedings of the XIVth International Congress of Aesthetics 1998, Part I, Ljubljana 1999, p. 213.

[58] Ibid., p. 217.

[59] Ibid. p. 215.

[60] Ibid. p. 218.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Myllylä won the 10, 30 and 50km cross-country races.

aesthetics, and of aestheticism are open to different and conflicting interpretations. The concept of aestheticism, as used by the historian of ideas Allan Megill in his book *Prophets of Extremity* (1985) shows some affinities to Shusterman's and Welsch's conceptions of aestheticization. By "aestheticism" Megill understands the tendency "to see 'art' or 'language' or 'discourse' or 'text' as constituting the primary realm of human experience",[63] a tendency he regards as characteristic of much recent avant-garde thought. This aestheticism, emphasizing the potential of language to create its own reality is, according to Megill, a counterpart to the post-Romantic notion of the work of art creating it own reality.[64] Megill's "aestheticism" shares with postmodern aestheticization the critique of Enlightenment thought in stressing the constructivist character of discourse and language, perhaps also in the attempt "to bring back into thought and into our lives that form of edification, that reawakening of *ekstasis*, which in the Enlightenment and the post-Enlightenment view has largely been confined to the realm of art".[65] The "aestheticism" of the Enlightenment critics such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida, and the "aestheticization" discourse of Shusterman and Welsch can thus be seen to reformulate and to transform central themes in Romantic and post-Romantic aesthetics. Shusterman's and Welsch's reformulation of aesthetics and celebration of (certain aspects) of the aestheticization of contemporary life can be seen as a democratic and pragmatic version of the high-brow aestheticism Megill finds in Nietzsche and Heidegger.

In order to put the renewal of aesthetics envisaged by Shusterman and Welsch in sharper focus, it may be useful to contrast their views of the tasks of aesthetics with more traditional conceptions of the aims and purposes of philosophical aesthetics. The Polish philosopher and aesthetician, Bohdan Dziemidok, presents the following definition of aesthetics in *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Social Thought* (1993):

> In its modern meaning aesthetics is most frequently understood as a philosophical discipline which is either a philosophy of aesthetic phenomena (objects, qualities, experiences and values), or a philosophy of art (of creativity, of artwork, and its perception) or a philosophy of art criticism taken broadly (metacriticism), or, finally, a discipline which is concerned philosophically with all three realms jointly.[66]

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[63] Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 2.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., p. 342.

[66] Bohdan Dziemidok, "Aesthetics", *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Social Thought*, eds. William Outhwaite & Tom Bottomore (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 4.

Aesthetics is thus basically a philosophical discipline concerned with aesthetic phenomena in general and with works of art in particular as well as the philosophical analysis of art criticism (metacriticism). Although the philosophical study of aesthetic phenomena in general are said to form part of aesthetics, Dziemidok's definition is clearly art centred in a way that Shusterman's and Welsch's conceptions of aesthetics aren't.[67] The British philosopher and aesthetician Malcolm Budd presents a similar definition in another recent publication, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998), when he describes aesthetics as "consist[ing] of two parts: the philosophy of art, and the philosophy of aesthetic experience and character of objects or phenomena that are not art".[68] Whereas the problems of the philosophy of art are relatively well defined, "the philosophy of aesthetic experience" concerns a variety of heterogeneous phenomena, including not only aesthetic experiences of nature (environmental aesthetics), but it hardly includes "the aestheticization of ethics and everyday life".[69]

There is nothing wrong in studying the aestheticization of ethics and everyday life, on the contrary, it is important to study the manifold aestheticization processes at work in contemporary culture, but I doubt whether these concerns should be at centre of philosophical *aesthetics*. The arts and the experience of art raise many important and intriguing problems that should not be put into the mixed and rather ill-defined bag of "trans-aesthetics", nor should they be swallowed by a new "soma-aesthetics". Aleš Erjavec is right in saying that there is a "broadening of the notion of the *aesthetic*" at work here and that Welsch's trans-aesthetic implies a "collapsing of the *aesthetic* and of *aesthetics*".[70] I entirely agree with him that art should be

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[67] Cf. Susan Feagins definition of "aesthetics" in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (1995), where aesthetics is defined as " the branch of philosophy that examines the nature of art and the character of experience of art and the natural environment" (Susan Feagin, "Aesthetics", *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 10). Aesthetics is thus not identical with the philosophy of art, it includes environmental aesthetics, but hardly "the aestheticization of ethics and everyday life".

[68] Malcolm Budd, "Aesthetics", *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 1, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), 59.

[69] *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is intended to replace Paul Edwards large *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, published in 1967. The definition of "aesthetics" offered by John Hospers in that work reads: "[T]he philosophy of art covers a somewhat more narrow area than does aesthetics, since it is concerned with the concepts and problems that arise in connection with works of art and excludes, for example, the aesthetic experience of nature" (John Hospers, "Aesthetics, Problems of", *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol 1-2, ed. Paul Edwards, New York: Macmillan, 1967, p. 36).

[70] Aleš Erjavec, "Aesthetics as Philosophy", *Filozofski Vestnik* 1999:2, "Aesthetics as

viewed as "a relatively distinct phenomenon requiring its relatively distinct theoretical reflection".[71] The problems of representation in art, the value of art, the rationality of critical judgement etc., will not go away by simply ignoring them.[72] If we are not interested in such questions, we are not, I suggest, doing philosophical aesthetics (but, rather, undoing aesthetics). The questions concerning the aestheticization of theory, ethics and everyday life are best viewed as problems for the philosophy and sociology of culture and the criticism of culture. Art and aesthetics are too important to merge into an undifferentiated new discipline studying "the aestheticization of everything".[73]

Philosophy", Proceedings of the XIVth International Congress of Aesthetics 1998, Part I, Ljubljana 1999, p. 18.

[71] Ibid.

[72] See, for example, the excellent collection of essays *Art and Representation* which discusses the problem of representation in general and the problems of representation invarious art forms (*Art and Representation: Contributions to Contemporary Aesthetics*, ed. Ananta Ch. Sukla, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2001).

[73] This article is partly based on a paper presented at the International Colloquium "Aesthetics as Philosophy of Culture", organized by the Slovenian Society of Aesthetics in Ljubljana, 29 June-1July 2000. A few passages in sections II and IV have appeared in my article, "Aesthetics between Philosophy and Art: Four Variations", in Swedish in *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 2000:20-1, pp. 55-77.

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THE DANGERS OF POSTMODERNITY – A PHILOSOPHICAL RESPONSE

PAUL CROWTHER

Introduction

In this paper, I shall identify some key dangers presented by patterns of existence in the postmodern life-world. I will also indicate the basis of an adequate – that is to say, *refoundational* philosophical response to them. (A response of this kind is one which links cognition to constants bound up with the nature of human embodiment, but which allows that these constants are activated in contrasting ways under different historical conditions.)

Part One

David Harvey has noted that in the postmodern era economic modes of production have shifted away from the rigidly determined practices of the post-war period. Of the postmodern economy, Harvey notes

> 'It rests on flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products and patterns of consumption. It is characterised by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organisational innovations'.[1]

These radical innovations likewise engender a more globally integrated market. The ambiguities of this have been usefully summarised by Philip Cooke as follows:

> 'One of the most important changes in setting has been the emergence in the late modern period of an increasingly integrated global economy,

[1] David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 147.

> dominated by the most advanced forms of capitalist production and exchange. This development could be thought to run counter to the ... trend towards decentralisation. Yet it is not, because the global system has no centre. It is a decentred space of flows rather than a clearly hierarchical structured space of production'.[2]

This global but de-centred integration opens up a fascinating possibility – namely for the macro-social dimension of the civilizing process to facilitate greater integration without the use of coercive force. And again, this potential is also complemented by the globalizing effects of innovation in the field of medical and information technologies. The existence of satellite television and the Internet, for example, enable social developments and interactions to be communicated to even the most remote parts of the world. The 'global village' metaphor is in this respect an apt one. We now live in an epoch where consciousness of humanity and its vicissitudes *as a species*, is an idea which can be presented with sensory vividness rather than in merely abstract ideal terms. The self-regulation intrinsic to the civilizing process can accordingly be informed by a more intense universal orientation than has been possible before.

There is, of course, no guarantee that this universalised self-consciousness will be able to consolidate itself. On the one hand the possibility of developing the appropriate kinds of correlated international institutions and administrative structures is a formidably difficult one; and, on the other hand, any globalizing dynamic will tend to occur alongside vehement – even violent – assertions of local identity (as is the case, for example, in the tragic late twentieth century conflicts in the Balkans). This being said, however, there is no intrinsic reason why these difficulties should not find some cumulatively satisfactory resolution. It is, as the popular idiom has it, 'all to play for'.

Given these possibilities, and other undoubted advances made in relation to the other positive criteria of the civilizing process, it may seem that we are on the threshold of some golden age. However, if taken to an extreme, this can result in a negative factor *vis a vis* the civilizing process, namely *symbolic arrest* wherein communities and individuals are locked into transactions with symbols at the expense of and as a substitute for more basic life processes. Indeed, in the contemporary world there are of poststructuralist persuasion those who would deny that we can meaningfully talk of such processes independently of their symbolic modes of articulation.

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[2] Philip Cooke, *Back to the Future: Modernity, Postmodernity and Locality* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 141.

Before considering this let us look at the broad form of specifically postmodern symbolic arrest in more detail.

In its widest manifestations this takes the form of consumerism. Such a phenomenon has been a strong feature in the world socio-economic structure since the 1950's (and, indeed before that in the USA). It is a form of social mentality which seeks gratification through the purchase of items and where this gratification derives as much if not more from the packaging and 'lifestyle' connotations of an item, than its practical utility. Consumerism – as opposed to the production and exchange of goods *per se* – is driven by the advertising industry and concomitant productive patterns of in-built obsolescence i.e. artefacts made in such a way as to be used and disposed of quickly, so that the consumer is driven towards the purchase of new ones. In this form of society social kudos purtains primarily not towards achievement in the specialised symbolic practices, but rather to the variety of brand labelled goods which the individual has the financial resources to buy.

Consumerism is intricately bonded to a second factor in postmodern symbolic arrest, namely the global expansion of mass-media and information technology. Whatever universalising potential this may have, it comes at a great cultural price. In this respect, Neil Postman has observed that:

> 'We are now a culture whose information, ideas and epistemology are given form by television, not the printed word. To be sure there are still readers and there are many books published, but the uses of print and reading are not the same as they once were; not even in schools, the last institutions where print was thought to be invincible ... Print is now merely a residual epistemology, and it will remain so, aided to some extent by the computer, and newspapers and magazines that are made to look like televisions screens'.[3]

Postman makes an extremely damning analysis of the effects of television throughout all aspects of contemporary social existence, By its nature, television is a medium where compositional and editorial factors are to the fore. No matter how documentary its intent, the television programme is primarily constructed from different camera shots, and edited tape sequences. This in itself makes the medium unsuited to the presentation of temporally sustained rational exposition and argument. Material of this kind has to be compressed into more editorially amenable units.

Television's internal destructiveness *vis a vis* the foregoing has been

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[3] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Showbusiness* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 28.

dramatically compounded by the colonising power of one of its particular usages – in commercial advertising. Postman observes that:

> 'The move away from the use of propositions in commercial advertising began at the end of the nineteenth century. But it was not until the 1950's that the television commercial made linguistic discourse obsolete as the basis for product decisions. By substituting images for claims, the pictorial commercial made emotional appeals, not tests of truth, the basis of consumer decisions. The distance between rationality and advertising is now so wide that it is difficult to remember that there once existed a connection between them'.[4]

Indeed Postman continues:

> 'the television commercial is not all about the character of products to be consumed. It is about the character of the consumers of products. Images of movie stars and famous athletes, of scenic lakes and macho fishing trips, of elegant dinners ... – these tell us nothing about the products being sold. But they tell everything about the fears, fancies and dreams of those who might buy them. What the advertiser needs to know is not what is right about the product but what is wrong about the buyer'.[5]

Now these observations, of course, illuminate the link between television and the symbolically arrested consumer sensibility noted earlier, However, Postman also emphasises a much more far-reaching point namely that the television commercial and related entertainment idioms have colonised the presentation of news, current affairs, and politics. Not what is reported but how it is reported becomes the focus of meaning – its style, its 'cleverness' of presentation, and, in the case of politics and politicians, ' image' and 'sound bite'. Additionally (although Postman does not dwell on it much) more trivial pursuits such as sport are presented as if they were of the greatest existential import. The means to this are a sustained build-up to the sporting event through frenzied advertising in the weeks preceding it and then endless interviews and expert opinions etc. etc. just before, and during the actual occurrence of the event. In the world of postmodern symbolic arrest, life and death, world events, and the world of sport assume equal entertainment value.

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[4] Ibid, p. 131.
[5] Ibid, p. 131.

Part Two

It is also notable how symbolic arrest has permeated the world of public services and utilities and even educational institutions. Within them develop what might be called a 'management culture' wherein services and processes are 'repackaged' and 'products' are promoted as if the relationships involved were purely commercial ones. The dimension of symbolic arrest here focuses on the way in which management culture seeks to promote 'efficiency' but does so only by interpreting it on the basis of models of social interaction and outcomes derived from cybernetics and the advertising industry. What results is not a more functionally efficient institution or service but rather one which is seen to *display* a well organised management structure. In effect, the symbolic relations and internal dynamics of bureaucracy become ends in themselves.

Another zone of postmodern symbolic arrest which is worth considering is in the visual arts. Here there is some affinity with the management culture just discussed. In 1964, for example, Tom Wolfe's book *The Painted Word*[6] put a light-hearted case for interpreting much twentieth-century modernist art as dependent for its intelligibility upon accompanying bodies of theoretical discourse. Wolfe's reading is, in fact, not true of this art *per se*, but it is true of much conceptually-based 'art' practice since the 1960's. Elsewhere[7] I have argued that 'meaning' in such works is largely determined by contemporary curatorial interests – the art object exists only as a vehicle for *talk* about art and its modes of social significance or otherwise. It's raison d'être is as a symbolic display not of art, but of those conditions and institutions under which it is constituted by persons whose proper business is its management, criticism, or historical interpretation.

The phenomenon of symbolic arrest has also characterised dominant contemporary strategies in the other specialised symbolic practices, most notably philosophy, literary theory and the social sciences. At the heart of this is a group of theoretical approaches known collectively as poststructualism. Figures such as Derrida, Lacan, Barthes, Foucault and (to some extent) Baudrillard,[8] emphasise that knowledge only occurs as an articulation within a *field* of signifying relations, and that this renders meaning, truth, and subjectivity, much more unstable and fluid notions than has hitherto been

[6] Tom Wolfe, *The Painted Word* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980).

[7] In my 'Against Curatorial Imperialism: Merleau-Ponty and the Fundamental Historicity of Art', in the *Blackwell Companion to Art Theory* ed. P. Smith and C. Wilde, Blackwells (forthcoming).

[8] For a critique of Baudrillard's position see Chapter 9 of my *The Language of Twentieth Century Art: A Conceptual History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997).

supposed. This attitude has become a general characteristic of much contemporary thought. In fact, Hans Bertens has suggested that something like it informs most recent attempts to comprehend the general nature of postmodernity. In his words:

> 'If there is a common denominator to all ... postmodernisms, it is that of a crisis of representation: a deeply felt loss of faith in our ability to represent the real, in the widest sense. No matter whether they are aesthetic, epistemological, oral, or political in nature, the representations that we used to rely on can no longer be taken for granted'.[9]

The most radical form of this scepticism is found in Derrida's philosophy. Derrida's basic position has been excellently summarised by Wolfgang Welsch as follows:

> 'Derrida proved that meaning is always due to the inscription in media, and that mediality does not first ensue subsequently and externally but is constitutive for meaning at the outset, that it has *productive* significance for processes of meaning. Meaning is not, as the metaphysical tradition had thought, 'tarnished' or faked through the materiality of the medium; rather without this connection there would be no meaning at all. The pure sign-free meaning which the tradition had dreamt of was a phantom. Today this is – thanks to media experience – the state of reflection in philosophy'.[10]

Welsch's point in the last sentence here is an important one. The diverse modes of representation made possible by recent innovations in media and information technology are themselves an exemplification of Derrida's sign-based epistemology. They reveal the ways in which different media are constitutive of our ways of experiencing the world. Hence Welsch's general conclusion that:

> 'today's philosophy considers complete worlds – be it the everyday world, the physical world, or a literary world – to be constructions and, to this extent, at least in part to be artefacts. Artistic or fictional feats, inhere in all worlds, starting with the fundamental schemata of perception, via modes of symbolisation, through to the forms of evaluation of objects. And it cannot be said that any of these procedures and criteria could be straightforwardly derived from a reality-in-itself. – All worlds are basically artificial worlds.'[11]

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[9] Hans Bertens, *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 11.
[10] Wolfgang Welsch, *Undoing Aesthetics* (London: Sage, 1997), p. 177.
[11] Ibid, p. 171.

Welsch's leap from the fact that signs necessarily mediate our experience of reality, to the conclusion that they are constitutive of it in a radical sense, is what I shall call *epistemological nihilism.* Such a viewpoint does not deny that there is a realm of being beyond signification, but it does deny that this realm can provide the conceptual foundations for distinguishing between forms of knowledge, or for the objective superiority of one conceptual frame over another.

Epistemological nihilism is, I would suggest, the inevitable outcome of all the varieties of poststructualism. Indeed, the familiar idea of reality as a 'social construct' propagated in much social science and 'discourse theory' is itself a crude form of epistemological nihilism. I would argue further that such nihilisms exemplify postmodern symbolic arrest in its most dense and strangulating form. Reality is seen in the most basic terms, as an effect of varieties of symbolic artifice. Rather than achieving self-regulation through adapting to, and articulating reality, self-consciousness is locked into the fantasy that symbolic display of one sort or another is a sufficient characterisation of the real. In a sense this involves an unrecognised regression to a mythical mode of thought, insofar as symbol and reality are taken to be fused with one another.

Now it might be argued that the problem, of symbolic arrest has been overstated here. Whatever else is the case about postmodern society, it represents a real diversification of life-choices which are open to the individual, and, in particular, it has allowed the voices of marginalised or repressed communities to not only obtain a hearing, but to become a part of a mainstream eclectic culture.

But again, whilst these are indeed positive factors, the dimension of symbolic arrest presents, nevertheless, the direst problems. The irony is that whilst the potential for great advance exists, this potential is being squandered and much worse. The squandering consists in the way that symbolic arrest actually works counter to its intended effects. In the health services, for example, the nursing profession still caters for patients, but the energies of experienced staff – which could be of *most* benefit to those who are in need of care – is diverted into useless administrative duties. These duties engender plans, flow charts, and other signifiers of efficiency, but this is efficiency only in a rhetorical sense. The figures 'cash out'. Budgets are balanced but responsibility for patient care is devolved on to the young and inexperienced. In practice, the patient loses out. The very functions which define the nursing profession are contradicted by the means of their, supposedly, more efficient realisation.

This embodies a kind of law of symbolic arrest which pervades

contemporary society. Broadly speaking, the more the term 'quality' is used as a rhetorical goal in relation to operational strategies in the public services, utilities, and education, the more the image of efficient operation is conveyed, and the less, correspondingly, are the actual benefits which accrue to the recipients. Admittedly, the systems still work but *how* they work is a pale shadow of the ways in which they *could* and *should* work.

The danger is amplified in the context of information technology. In his book *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality* Michael Heim judiciously observes that

> 'Business in America embraced computers under the magic rubric of *productivity*. Yet company reports do not seem to get better after thirty drafts. Real economic productivity in the United States actually declined over the last decade, and so has the competitiveness of the US economy. Feel productive; push more paper.'[12]

Of course information technology is an enormous boon in relation to all aspects of contemporary productive processes, but Heim's point is that it also engenders a futile tendency to produce information for its own sake, even in contexts where it is actually meant to promote efficiency. More generally he notes that:

> 'Infomania erodes our capacity for significance. With a mind-set fixed on information, our attention span shortens. We collect fragments. We become mentally poorer in overall meaning. We get into the habit of clinging to knowledge bits and loose our feel for the wisdom behind the knowledge.'[13]

On these terms, the new technology tends to engender an aimless and fragmented pursuit of information for its own sake. The computer-user 'surfs the Internet' in the apotheosis of what Heidegger once characterised as empty 'curiosity'. This – like the wanderings of the 'flaneur' – has its attractions, but not if carried to a point of obsessiveness. Such a point, if culturally generalised, takes us to the zone of absolute danger. Heim's book is actually illustrative of this in several respects. For example, whilst identifying the dangers of information technology obsession his response to this is to advocate a quasi-mystical oriental counter-philosophy which, in effect, amounts to a kind of exotic Californian holiday which occasionally keeps one away from the computer. In terms of reality, however, Californian holidays are, at best, of

[12] Michael Heim, *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 5.
[13] Ibid, p. 10.

limited duration. They do not amount to taking control of a situation – which is surely the response demanded here.

The real problem is that information technology (and variants – such as virtual reality) have, like the media and advertising industries, an intoxicating glamour whereby the individual focuses on and consumes the symbolic means rather than the functional ends which are involved. And like the televisual image, information technology has its own adverse epistemological effect over and above the mere diminution of attention span. Heim describes it as follows:

> 'The computer absorbs our language so we can squirt symbols at lightening speeds or scan the whole range of human thought with Boolean searches. Because the computer, not the student does the translating, [a] shift takes place subtly. The computer system slides us from a fierce awareness of things to the detached world of logical distance. By encoding language as data the computer already modifies the language we use into mathematized ASCII (American Standard Code of Information Interchange). We can then operate with the certitude of Boolean formulas. The logical distance we gain offers all the allure of control and power without the pain of having to translate back and forth from our everyday approach to the things we experience.'[14]

On these terms, thought processes which follow the prompting of information technology have a reductive effect. The sensible particularity and complexity of the real is expressed abstractly as a logic of inclusion and exclusion *vis a vis* class membership. Reality does, of course, have this aspect, but symbolic expressions of it do no justice to such things as, for example, concrete patterns of human interaction. Applied beyond the appropriate context, the idioms of information technology function as symbolic displays which distort and conceal the realities which they are meant to articulate.

Part Three

All the factors which I have described so far enmesh with one another. Postmodern existence both operates and is definable within a world wide web of symbolic arrest. And in every web there is something nasty. In this case the something nasty is uniquely, a product of the factors which constitute the web. It is a 'creature' of two converging aspects – one being an artificially induced mutation of self-consciousness, and the other being a something 'other' than human being.

[14] Ibid, p. 21.

The former I shall call the *qualitative cyborg*. To work towards its understanding let us first define the cyborg as a human who has been implanted with genetically-engineered tissue or micro-chip technology. In a quantitative sense this is not problematic. Interventions of this sort can enhance the body's capacity to resist illness, disease, and can compensate for congenital deficiencies. However, let us suppose that these interventions are directed not towards resisting or preventing adverse factors in bodily existence but towards the transformation of cognitive structures.

There is a massive amount of contemporary writing which wriggles and writhes in ecstasy at this very prospect.[15] The idea is that if one can 'interface' with a virtual-reality cyberspace whenever one desires then this will engender a liberation from the body and a projection into a realm of freedom and realisable fantasy. William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer* is frequently cited as a exemplar of what this might be like.

It is, however, important to distinguish between this essentially fantasy notion of the cyborg and the qualitative variety. All fantasy derives its potency and desirability from the matrix of physical embodiment. There can only be adventures in virtual cyberspace because of the patterns of loss and gain – the 'economy of desire' referred to in the last Chapter – which characterises the being of embodied subjectivity. No matter how immersed in virtual cyberspace one might become, what is experienced there only has meaning by virtue of its reference back to the body and its mundane interactions. Remove that, and the conditions which render fantasy meaningful are removed. The significance of desire realised in a cyber-world may appear to be other than that of normal embodied existence, but it merely extends the customary economy of desire in an unrecognised form. And the real always returns. At some point the cybernaut is reluctantly summoned back to the domain of everydayness. He or she thus becomes something of a divided 'unhappy consciousness' in the Hegelian sense.

Now it might be that the cybernaut may be able to strike some *modus vivendi* between the real and the virtual. But unless the nature of this relation and it components are subjected to searching critical scrutiny on the basis of an adequate epistemology, all that we have are fantasies of harmony. And one particularly foolish fantasy of this kind beckons to the cyber-addict. It is that of the total immersion scenario, where the addict chooses to be placed in a virtual-system which brings about the delusion that what they are experiencing

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[15] See, for example, some of the essays in *Virtual Futures: Cyberotics, Technology, and Post-Human Pragmatism*, ed. Joan Broadhurst Dixon and Eric J. Cassidy (London: Routledge, 1998).

is real. The addict is able to exist continuously in this cyber-world though also being placed in a biomechanical support system which provides for nutrition, the discharge of waste, and regular toning up of muscles and tissue. The film *The Matrix* is loosely prophetic of this.

Such a context radicalises the dimension of unhappy consciousness noted earlier. For the cybernaut's existence is now absolutely dependent on a reality which – as a deluded subject – he or she has no volitional relation to. No matter what interactive cyber relations evolve within the total immersion system, and no matter how reliable in principle the biomechanical support system is, they are absolutely dependent on contingencies. A super-virus, environmental disaster, or even the malignant flick of a switch outside the system, could destroy this cyber-world *in toto*. The individuals within the system would have no opportunity to prepare for such happenstances, neither would they be able to formulate responses to them.

The burgeoning literature of cyber-babble rarely reaches as far as these insights. Indeed, its preoccupation with cybernaut fantasies has meant that the real issue has scarcely been addressed. For the cyborgs just described do not embody a radical transformation of humanity, but rather a particularly stupid mode of self-indulgence. The cyber-augmentation of cognitive capacities involved here amounts to little more than a quantitative intensification of those patterns of desire and gratification which are defined by the condition of embodied subjectivity.

The qualitative cyborg is *very* different. This can be shown by developing a contrast. The embodied subject's remembrance of the past and its imaginative projection of experiential possibility involve the generation of imagery to satisfy linguistic descriptions. This generation is, however, at best piecemeal, fragmentary, and highly creative. Indeed, it is precisely the incompleteness of such generation which necessitates narrative as the basis of the cohesion of the self. We know that the body exists continuously through space and time, but we can only comprehend this existence as a unity (i.e. become self-conscious) insofar as the continuum is marked out in terms of mutually significant episodes and events. This narrative structure depends as much upon what we are unable to remember or project, as it does upon what we can actually realise.

Let us suppose, however, that through biomechanical implants or genetically engineered tissues, some humans are able to massively augment their powers of recall and imaginative projection. Their mental engrams now admit of virtually full rather than schematic embodiment. A being of this kind can choose to, as it were, switch-off its present input of stimuli, so as to replay past experiences or project possible ones with a sensory vividness that

approximates immediate perception. For such an agent it would seem as if these experiences were actually occurring in the present.

In order for such a cyborg to function it would need some kind of cognitive bracketing out mechanism whereby its virtual experiences were recognised as projections and not real stimuli from the present, This is necessary because if an agent could not distinguish between present, past, and mere possibility, its sense of self would be collapsed. This being said, it may be that bracketing devices of the most enormous complexity could be developed. These would enable a controlled interface between both the present and past and possible experience, which could draw simultaneously on all the senses *and* the subject's general experiential viewpoint. Hence, in recalling a past event, we would not only project what we perceived but also something of those affective states and broader attitudes which informed that particular perceptual engagement. Similarly, in projecting future or counterfactual possibilities, we would not only 'see' and ' hear' etc. a state of affairs but would also extrapolate and project an image of how we might feel in that context and how our personal worldview might differ from its present incarnation.

A biotechnical project of this kind would probably, at the outset, have a purely quantitative orientation. It would seek to merely improve or augment human cognitive mechanisms. In the long term, however, it could easily produce a *qualitative* transformation. This is because the specifically human form of finitude is here radically changed. To be able both to recreate the past and project alternative experiences with virtual exactness, is to eliminate that dimension of incompleteness and lack which necessitate narrative as the basis of unity of the self. For the qualitative cyborg, nothing is lost and nothing much is gained in the passage of life. On the one hand, its past moments can live again in the present and on the other hand, the attractions of the future are vitiated through the power to project alternative experiential possibilities at will and at any time. The emphasis in experience is, thereby, shifted away from narrative meaning towards mere continuity. Different things happen to the qualitative cyborg, but none of these things existentially outweigh any other. The past does not fade, and any future or counterfactual possibility that one cares to project can live, as it were, in advance of the future. Every experience has equality of intensity and value.

On these terms, then, mere augmentation of cognitive capacities can lead to a being whose finitude is qualitatively different from that of a human. Such a being has an immediate present, but to the degree that it can recall or project its experience is not closely bound to that immediate present. In the case of the human being, in contrast, the immediate present forms the focal point of its sense of self. As it cannot recall the past or project alternative

experiences with any completeness, it must link these selectively and evaluatively in a cumulative narrative which contextualises and makes its immediate present meaningful.

The qualitative cyborg has no need of such a narrative. Such self-consciousness as it starts with is compressed into a one dimensional vector of activity – namely a means/end rationality directed towards maximising the possibilities of its own survival. The only avenues of intrinsic value which would be relevant to it are those symbolic specialised practices which have technological or practical use. Given the appropriate interface stations one such cyborg would be able to communicate its own history *in toto* to another. There would be no problem of interpersonal communication since the very narrative factors which are the basis of personality are what the qualitative cyborg's cognitive augmentations serve to diminish. Language, empathic identification, and imagination would be mechanised in the direction of informational interface alone. The aesthetic dimension of experience would disappear entirely. Such a being would only be self-conscious in a formal sense i.e. it could identify itself as having occupied and being able to occupy spatio-temporal co-ordinates other than its immediate one, but these would not matter to it except in a quantitative sense. They would simply be units accumulated alongside others in the continuous flow of its existence.

Now a cyborg of this kind begins – in my scenario – as an implanted human whose cognitive augmentations push it unintentionally in this dehumanised direction. It is driven by animal instincts for survival and reproduction, and, given the elimination of narrative meaning, these are all that its cognitive powers can be directed towards. There would be nothing else for it. It follows, therefore, that such a being would gradually seek out and bond with others of the same kind for survival and reproductive purposes. Given the appropriate *in vitro* fertilisation and nurturing technology it is quite possible that these purposes could be realised. Humanity would have accidentally created a mutant species which would find its own creators at best incomprehensible and, at worst, of significance only insofar as they inhibited or could be put to use in the facilitation of cyborg survival. Not only would these beings be alien to the civilizing process, they could threaten its very existence.

The technological innovations which make the qualitative cyborg feasible are also of considerable concern in themselves, especially in relation to the massively accelerating growth of artificial neural networks and nano-technology. It is possible, for example, that artificial intelligence will be created with a capacity to evolve autonomously towards levels of biological complexity. If such 'artilects' were able to engage with one another and engender their

own 'forms of life' (in the Wittgensteinian sense) then the human species would find that it had, inadvertently, created a much more powerful rival to its own dominion of the earth. The potential for violence here would almost be beyond comprehension.

Qualitative cyborgs and artilects are not just science-fiction, they are already visible on the technological horizon. We are making them emerge from the world wide web of symbolic arrest. Unfortunately it is the cosy science-fiction mentality of cyber-babble which inhibits an adequate awareness of the dangers which the qualitative cyborg and the artilect present. Science fiction – however horrible the possibilities it projects – is a human endeavour with outcomes controlled by its creators. The possibilities which I am describing are not. In the unpleasant unglamorous real world our capacity for controlled endings has been diminished. Things *much* worse than the possibilities which I have described may happen. Unfortunately, because contemporary symbolic arrest is unable to distinguish between scientific fact and the comforts of science fiction, it regresses to a level of mythic understanding which is of a particularly childish kind. Everything *has to* work out for the best, in the end, so all that we need do in the meantime is to float through delicious cyber-space fantasies.

We are left then, with the following position. If the postmodern world continues on its present symbolically arrested course it is quite conceivable that civilization will come to an end through the advent of an era of cyber-modernity, where mechanised processes define the terms of existence, or where biomachines extinguish or enslave the human species. The alternative is for philosophy to intervene. This does not entail a rejection of technological innovation. Rather it involves a critical thinking through of historical change in relation to these enduring epistemological and aesthetic factors which are the basis of self-consciousness and the civilizing process. In this way one might hope to establish a critical philosophical standpoint which could help regulate – however minimally – the transition to what comes after postmodernism.

Conclusion

I shall now consider where such a philosophy should be sought, and what its relation to postmodernity might be. In terms of the first question, we must recall the central tenet of the refoundational strategy, namely that constant elements in experience are always articulated under historically specific circumstances. This means that their philosophical comprehension will take different forms at different times. In some epochs, such and such a constant

will figure more centrally in experience than others, and philosophical discourse will reflect this accordingly. At other times, constants which hitherto only seemed of marginal importance will come to the fore in unexpected ways and become thereby much more accessible to philosophical understanding.

One of the most striking examples of this is the contemporary primacy of signification. Signification is a necessary condition of any possible experience over and above mere animal consciousness, and the ubiquity of signs in contemporary consumer culture is a heightened expression of this necessity. Indeed, the current prevalence of epistemological nihilism has a similar disclosive significance *vis-a-vis* both the structure of signification itself, and its more general ramifications. It serves, in particular, (whatever its faults) to affirm the fact that meaning is not some simple correspondence between sign and referent, but gravitates around the sign's relation to other signs in a developing *field* of signifying relations. This insight is of vital importance in comprehending the dynamic complexity of the self – but only if it is correlated with an understanding of those constant reciprocal relations which stabilise the cognitive field, and, thereby, give holistic cohesion to the self. (It is these stabilising factors, of course, which epistemological nihilism fails to negotiate.)

Given this decisive philosophical clue from postmodern culture, and the need to overcome its limitations, the question arises as to which philosophical positions should be drawn from in this task. On the basis of a refoundational approach, one need not be tied to any single thinker or philosophical school. This is because any significant philosophical work will offer some way or other of identifying constants in experience. The thing is to select sources which also illuminate one's present situation through their particular way of articulating the more enduring factors. In the present case, this means a philosophy which can locate us in relation to the clues noted above and which can develop them on the basis of a systematic notion of reciprocal relations thus enabling the articulation of self-consciousness as *a process of realisation.*

This project could usefully draw on the Hegelian tradition, or a totally re-thought historical materialism. There is, however, an even more directly relevant method which itself cuts across some customary methodological boundaries. It can be called *transcendental hermeneutics.* The first term in this title signifies an intention to clarify those constants which are logically necessary conditions for objective knowledge and self-consciousness. The second term indicates that this will not issue in some exhaustive and fixed philosophical system, but is, rather, an on-going process of clarification, critique, and reformulation – all in all a sustained interpretative task.

What makes transcendental hermeneutics more than the sum of its two

parts, however, is the possibility of *progressive articulation.* This means that through its dialogue with tradition and its own historically specific context of experience, transcendental hermeneutics seeks to establish the truth of self-consciousness on the same basis as the civilizing process itself i.e. as a cumulative process advancing – however, erratically – to higher stages. Our criterion of 'higher' in this context, is the ability to identify constants and their reciprocal relations with one another, to continuously differentiate them internally and reassess the nature of the whole in the light of this. Just as importantly it involves a tracing of the implications of this process in relation to the problems of the present and in relation to the present's implications for it.

If such an analytic momentum can be historically sustained each distinct phase of development can be, in logical terms, more consistent and more comprehensive in explanatory and methodological power than the preceding phases. Since, however one of the main effects of historical existence is the forgetting of the past, the emphasis of philosophical analysis in any one period may – for contemporary cultural reasons – focus on one group of constants and forget or neglect others which have been previously illuminated. This is why a transcendental hermeneutical approach does not seek a definitive resolution to philosophical problems. Changing historical circumstances disclose new aspects to familiar categories, as well as concealing others. Transcendental hermeneutics, accordingly, involves a constant reinterpretation of the past in relation to the present, and the acknowledgement that the only complete framework of philosophical truth is that of progressive articulation as the possibility of *a continuous open-ended process of gradual cumulative advance.*

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TRANSCULTURALITY: THE CHANGING FORM OF CULTURES TODAY

WOLFGANG WELSCH

"When we think of the world's future,
we always mean the destination it will reach
if it keeps going in the direction we can see it going in now;
it does not occur to us
that its path is not a straight line but a curve,
constantly changing direction."

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 1929

A simple question was occasion for me a decade ago to develop the concept of transculturality. I had the impression that our present concepts of culture were no longer suited to their object, today's cultures. Put the other way round: Contemporary cultures seemed to be exhibiting a constitution different to that asserted, or suggested by our concepts of culture. So we'd better develop a new conceptualization of culture. This I attempt to do under the heading 'transculturality'.[1]

The following account comprises four sections: firstly a critique of the traditional concept of single cultures, secondly a critique of the more recent concepts of multiculturality and interculturality, thirdly a detailed discussion of the concept of transculturality, and fourthly some further perspectives. The concept of transculturality, it seems to me, is for both descriptive and normative reasons the most appropriate to today's cultures.

[1] The first version of this conception was published as "Transkulturalität – Lebensformen nach der Auflösung der Kulturen" (in: *Information Philosophie*, 2, 1992, pp. 5-20). It was developed further in "Auf dem Weg zu transkulturellen Gesellschaften", in: *Die Zukunft des Menschen – Philosophische Ausblicke*, ed. Günter Seubold (Bonn: Bouvier, 1999), pp. 119-144.

One thing beforehand: I will certainly, in some respects, schematize, extrapolate and exaggerate the development which I believe can be witnessed. There will be several things in this to criticize. However, firstly, if one wants to say anything at all, then one must exaggerate. And secondly, exaggeration is a principle of reality itself; tomorrow's reality will be the exaggeration of today's; it is this which we call development.

I. The traditional concept of single cultures

Why do I think that the conventional concepts of culture are no longer suited to the constitution of today's cultures? How was the traditional conceptuality of culture comprised, and what are the new realities which no longer submit to the old precepts?

1. 'Culture' in the tradition

a. From a special to a general concept of culture

'Culture' first developed into a *general concept*, spanning not only single, but all the reifications of human life, in the late 17th century. As a general concept of this type, 'culture' appeared for the first time in 1684 with the natural rights scholar Samuel von Pufendorf.[2] He denoted as 'culture' the sum of those activities through which humans shape their life as being specifically human – in contrast to a merely animal one.[3]

Prior to this the noun 'culture' had not had an absolute usage such as this. Culture had been a relative expression, bearing only on specific realms or activities. Accordingly, in antiquity, Cicero had spoken of the "cultura animi" ("care of the spirit"),[4] patristics propagandized the "cultura Christianae religionis",[5] and in the Renaissance, Erasmus or Thomas More pleaded for

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[2] In the second edition of his script *De jure naturae et gentium libri octo* (Frankfurt, 2nd ed. 1684) Pufendorf effected, in several places, the transition from the traditional concept of a specific 'cultura animi' to the new talk of a general 'cultura' (Book II, Ch. 4, § 1). Prior to this, he had already spoken of "vera cultura" in a letter to Christian Thomasius of 19th January 1663, that is, strictly speaking, made absolute use of the expression 'cultura' for the very first time (the letter is printed in: Christian Thomasius, *Historia juris naturalis*, Halle 1719, Appendix II, Epistola I, pp. 156-166, here p. 162).

[3] Cf. Samuel von Pufendorf, *De jure naturae et gentium libri octo*, II, 4.

[4] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes*, II, 13.

[5] Cf. Wilhelm Perpeet, "Zur Wortbedeutung von 'Kultur'", in: *Naturplan und Verfallskritik.*

the "cultura ingenii" – the culture of the inventive spirit.[6] For centuries, the expression 'culture' appeared only in such compounds and related to *specific* realms of activity.

With Pufendorf 'culture' became a collective singular and an autonomous concept which now – in a presumptuous unification – claimed to encompass the *whole of* a people's, a society's or a nation's activities. A hundred years later this global concept of culture obtained through Herder – especially in his *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* which appeared from 1784 to 1791 – a form which was to remain exemplary for the time to follow.[7,8] Many among us still believe this Herderian concept of culture to be valid. It's not only traditionalist minds that do this, rather we are presently also witnessing various revivals of this conception: they stretch from ethnic fundamentalism through to Huntington's talk of "civilizations".

b. Herder's concept of culture

In terms of its basic structure, Herder's concept is characterized by three determinants: by social homogenization, ethnic consolidation and intercultural delimitation.[9] Firstly, every culture is supposed to mould the whole life of the people concerned and of its individuals, making every act and every object an unmistakable instance of precisely *this* culture. The concept is unificatory. Secondly, culture is always to be the "*culture of a folk*", representing, as Herder said, "the flower" of a folk's existence.[10] So the concept is folk-bound. Thirdly, a decided *delimitation* towards the outside ensues: Every culture is, as the culture of one folk, to be distinguished and to remain separated from other folks' cultures. The concept is separatory.

Zu Begriff und Geschichte der Kultur, eds Helmut Brackert and Fritz Wefelmeyer (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 21-28, here p. 22.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1966). The work first appeared in four separate parts, each of five books, in the years 1784, 1785, 1787 and 1791, published by the Hartknoch press in Riga and Leipzig.

[8] Cf. for the history of the concept of 'culture': Joseph Niedermann, *Kultur. Werden und Wandlungen des Begriffs und seiner Ersatzbegriffe von Cicero bis Herder* (Florence: Bibliopolis, 1941); Perpeet, "Zur Wortbedeutung von 'Kultur'", l.c.; Jörg Fisch, "Zivilisation, Kultur", in: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), vol. 7, pp. 679-774; Gyorgy Markus, "Culture: the making and the make-up of a concept (an essay in historical semantics)", in: *Dialectical Anthropology* 18 (1993), pp. 3-29.

[9] I shall not take account of Herder's particularities here, but rather concentrate on the typology of his concept of culture.

[10] Herder, op. cit.

2. Obsolete features

All three elements of this traditional concept have become untenable today. First: Modern societies are differentiated within themselves to such a high degree that uniformity is no longer constitutive to, or achievable for them (and there are reasonable doubts as to whether it ever has been historically). T. S. Eliot's Neo-Herderian statement from 1948, that culture is "the *whole way of life* of a people, from birth to the grave, from morning to night and even in sleep",[11] has today become an obviously ideological decree.[12] Modern societies are multicultural in themselves, encompassing a multitude of varying ways of life and lifestyles. There are – firstly – vertical differences in society: the culture of a working-quarter, a well-to-do residential district, and that of the alternative scene, for example, hardly exhibit any common denominator. And there are – secondly – horizontal divisions: gender divisions, differences between male and female, or between straight, lesbian and gay can constitute quite different cultural patterns and forms of life. – So already with respect to this first point, homogeneity, the traditional concept of culture proves to be factually inadequate: it cannot cope with the inner complexity of modern cultures.

Secondly, the ethnic consolidation is dubious: Herder sought to envisage cultures as closed spheres or autonomous islands, each corresponding to a folk's territorial area and linguistic extent. Cultures were to reside strictly within themselves and be closed to their environment. – But as we know, such folk-bound definitions are highly imaginary and fictional; they must laboriously be brought to prevail against historical evidence of intermingling. Nations are not something given but are invented and often forcibly established.[13] And the political dangers of folk-based and ethnic fantasies can today be experienced almost worldwide.

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[11] T. S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), p. 31.

[12] The ethnology of the 20th century also worked for a long time with the notion that culture is a structured and integrated organic whole in itself. Ruth Benedict's book *The Patterns of Culture* (Boston and New York: Houghton Miffin Company, 1934) is representative of this. From the sixties and seventies onwards doubts about this premiss were increasingly expressed (see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973). Margaret Archer called the "myth of cultural integration" the dubious "legacy of ethnology" (Margaret Archer, *Culture and Agency*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 2 ff.).

[13] This was effectively noted by Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm: "The central mistake committed both by the friends and the enemies of nationalism is the supposition that it is somehow *natural* [...] The truth is, on the contrary, that there is nothing natural or universal about possessing a 'nationality'" (Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change*, London: Weidenfeld

Finally, the concept demands outer delimitation. Having noted that "every nation has its *centre* of happiness *within itself* just as each sphere its centre of gravity",[14] Herder typically enough continues: "Everything which is still the *same* as my nature, which can be *assimilated* therein, I envy, strive towards, make my own; *beyond this*, kind nature has armed me with *insensibility, coldness* and *blindness*; it can even become *contempt* and *disgust*."[15] – As you see: Herder defends the double of emphasis on the own and exclusion of the foreign, the traditional concept of culture being a concept of inner homogenization and outer separation at the same time. Put harshly: It tends – as a consequence of its very conception – to a sort of cultural racism.[16] The sphere premiss and the purity precept not only render impossible a mutual understanding between cultures, but the appeal to cultural identity of this kind finally leads to separatism and paves the way for political conflicts and wars.[17]

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and Nicholson, 1964, p. 150 f.). "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it *invents* nations where they do not exist" (ibid., p. 168). "[...] the national phenomenon cannot be adequately investigated without careful attention to the 'invention of tradition'" (Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", in: *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983, p. 14).

[14] Johann Gottfried Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* [1774] (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), p. 44 f.

[15] Ibid., p. 45. Herder continues: "[...] see how the Egyptian *hates* the shepherd, the vagabond! how he *despises* the frivolous Greek! So it is for each two nations whose inclinations and circles of happiness *clash* – one calls it *prejudice*! *vulgarity*! insular *nationalism*!" (ibid., p. 45 f.) Against this Enlightening objection, Herder explains: "Prejudice is good [...] for it makes for *happiness*. It forces peoples together to their *centre*, makes them firmer at their stem, more flourishing *in their kind*, more fervent and then happier too in their *inclinations* and *aims*" (ibid., p. 46). He further says: "The least knowing, most prejudiced nation is, so considered, often the first: the age of wandering desires and hopeful voyages abroad is already *illness, flatulence, unhealthy corpulence, death's apprehension!*" (ibid.).

[16] A type of racism is – with the island, or sphere axiom – built in, one which is even retained wherever biologically ethnic racism is discarded, that is, where the respective culture is no longer defined with recourse to a folk's nature, but with resort instead to definitional substitutes such as nation, state, or even – circularly – to a "cultural nation". For, in changelessly clinging to the autonomous form of culture, one continues to advocate structurally a kind of *cultural* racism. – In a highly regarded speech to the Unesco in 1971, Lévi-Strauss pointed out the relevance of specifically cultural racism. 'Race' is, according to him, to be understood not so much as the basis, but as a *function* of culture. Every culture, to the extent that it autonomously develops itself and delimits itself from other cultures, tends to cultural racism (Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Race et Culture", in: Lévi-Strauss, *Le regard éloigné* (Paris: Plon, 1983), pp. 21-48, in particular here p. 36). – For the strategic function of racism in the modern state, cf.: Michel Foucault, "Faire vivre et laisser mourir: la naissance du racisme", in: *Les Temps Modernes*, 46, 1991, no. 535, pp. 37-61.

[17] This separatist complex can be formulated harmoniously. You then say: Every culture is immediate to God. (With this, I am varying Leopold von Ranke's formula "every epoch

To sum this up: The classical model of culture is not only descriptively unserviceable, but also normatively dangerous and untenable. What is called for today is a departure from this concept and to think of cultures beyond the contraposition of ownness and foreignness – "beyond both the heterogeneous and the own", as Adorno once put it.[18]

II. The concepts of multiculturality and interculturality

I now want to discuss the more recent concepts of multiculturality and interculturality. I will point to the disadvantageous manner in which – in spite of all apparent progressiveness – they still remain bound to the traditional concept.

1. Multiculturality

In contemplating the very multitude of different forms of life within one and the same society, the multiculturality concept seems to escape the dilemmas of the conventional concept of culture. But in continuing to understand the different cultures as being things independent and homogeneous in themselves, it still conceptually complies with the conventional understanding of culture. Therein lies its principal deficiency.

The concept tries to face up to the problems which different cultures have living together *within one society*. And this certainly does represent a progression compared with the old demands for societal homogenization. But for its part the concept is incapable of contributing to the solution of the problems *resulting* from plurality for the very reason that it still sticks to the old idea of culture's design. This it does, to be sure, not with regard to the erstwhile large cultures, but with respect to the many cultures within society upon which it focuses. It still conceives of these single cultures as being homogeneous and well delineated – that is, in precisely the old-fashioned Herderian style.

On the basis of this conception, a temporary respite in issues of tolerance, acceptance and avoidance of conflict between the different cultural groups might be attained, but never a real understanding or even a transgression of

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is immediate to God".) It can also be formulated realistically, then you must say: in this way, culture becomes a ghetto.

[18] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, in: Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 6 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 3rd ed. 1984), p. 192.

the separating barriers. Rather the multiculturality concept has the supposition and acceptance of these barriers as its basis. Hence it can – conditions in the US have demonstrated this for years – even be used to justify and reinforce appeals for demarcation.[19] The concept thereby threatens to favor regressive tendencies which, in appealing to cultural identity (a construction which is most often gained from the imagination of some yesteryear), lead to ghettoization and cultural fundamentalism.[20] In this way the burden inherited from its antiquated understanding of culture comes to the fore. Cultures which are apprehended in principle as being autonomous and like spheres *cannot* ultimately understand one another, but *must* rather – according with the logic of this apprehension – set themselves apart from one another; they must ignore, fail to recognize, defame and combat one another. This was, by the way, shrewdly expressed by Herder when he said that spheres of this type can only "*clash with one another*" and that their rebuttal of other cultures is a condition for their happiness.[21] In the context of multiculturalism, the

[19] Cf. Diane Ravitch, "Multiculturalism. E Pluribus Plures", in: *American Scholar* (1990), pp. 337-354; Hilton Kramer, "The prospect before us", in: *The New Criterion*, 9/1 (Sept. 1990), pp. 6-9; John Searle, "The Storm Over the University", in: *The New York Review of Books*, 6 Dec. 1990, pp. 34-42; *Multi Kulti: Spielregeln für die Vielvölkerrepublik*, ed. Claus Leggewie (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1990); Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York – London: Norton, 1991); Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Thomas Schmid, *Heimat Babylon: Das Wagnis der multikulturellen Demokratie* (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1992); *Pluralisme culturel en Europe: Culture(s) européenne(s) et culture(s) des diasporas*, ed. René Gallissot (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993); *From Different Shores: Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity in America*, ed. Ronald Takaki (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed. 1994); *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); *Multikulturelle Gesellschaft: Modell Amerika*, ed. Berndt Ostendorf (Munich: Fink, 1994); Wolfgang Kaschuba, "Kulturalismus: Kultur statt Gesellschaft?", in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 21 (1995), pp. 80-95; Richard Bernstein, *Dictatorship of Virtue: How the Battle Over Multiculturalism Is Reshaping Our Schools, Our Country, and Our Lives* (New York: Knopf, 1995); Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

[20] One complies with the maxim that cultures are to be their own – and they are exactly this, above all, when contrasted with other cultures and contrasted with a common culture. "Back to the roots" reads the magic formula, or "only tribes will survive". Salmon Rushdie once articulated a similar danger when talking to his fellow Indian writers: "[...] of all the many elephant traps lying ahead of us, the largest and most dangerous pitfall would be the adoption of a ghetto mentality. To forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong, to confine ourselves within narrowly defined cultural frontiers, would be, I believe, to go voluntarily into that form of internal exile which in South Africa is called the 'homeland'" (Salmon Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands" [1982], in: *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, London: Granta Books, 1991, pp. 9-21, here p. 19).

[21] Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, p. 46.

continued influence of the old cultural notion of inner homogeneity and outer delimitation more or less logically induces chauvinism and cultural separatism.[22] – And it seems to me that several adherents of the concept don't even want to solve but rather to reinforce the resulting problems.

2. Interculturality

A similar reservation seems to apply towards the concept of interculturality.[23] For all its good intentions it too continues *conceptually* to drag along with it the premisses of the traditional concept of culture: the insinuation of an island- or sphere-like constitution of cultures. It does recognize that this constitution necessarily leads to intercultural conflicts, and attempts to counter these with intercultural dialogue. It's just that as long as one goes along with the primary thesis of an island- or sphere-like cultural constitution these problems will not be soluble, because they *spring from* the primary thesis named. The classical concept of culture with its primary trait – the separatist character of cultures – *creates* the secondary problem of the difficult coexistence and structural inability to communicate between these cultures. Hence the resulting problems cannot be solved on the basis of this concept.[24]

So, in just the same way as the multiculturality thesis, the interculturality thesis doesn't get to the actual roots of the problem, but operates on a subsequent level, so to speak cosmetically. – Both the multicultural and intercultural issues ought to be addressed in a different manner from the outset: in view of today's permeation of cultures.

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[22] It is not enough here to point out cultures' factual endeavours towards delimitation. These would be less cogent if they were not backed up by the multiculturality concept and driven into the dead end of ghettoization. Cultural terms influence cultural self-understanding.

[23] Cf. for this concept Franz Wimmer, *Interkulturelle Philosophie* (Vienna: Passagen 1989), vol. 1; *Philosophische Grundlagen der Interkulturalität*, ed. Ram Adhar Mall and Dieter Lohmar (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993); Archie J. Bahm, *Comparative Philosophy: Western, Indian and Chinese Philosophies Compared* (Albuquerque, N.M: World Books revised edition 1995).

[24] This becomes very clear in Wang Bin's article "Relativismo culturale e meta-metodologia" (in: *Sguardi venuti da lontano. Un'indagine di Transcultura*, eds Alain Le Pichon and Letizia Caronia, Milan: Bompiani, 1991, pp. 221-241): if cultures are autonomous islands to begin with (ibid., 222), then a real understanding between them will first come about precisely when this premiss is done away with, when that is, the cultural differences de facto no longer exist (cf. p. 236). The island-basis creates the problem, which it can't solve – but from which one can appreciate that a solution can only be brought closer by overcoming the island-thesis.

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My criticism of the traditional conception of single cultures, as well as of the more recent concepts of multiculturality and interculturality can be summarized as follows: If cultures were in fact still – as these concepts suggest – constituted in the form of islands or spheres, then one could neither rid oneself of, nor solve the problem of their coexistence and cooperation. However, the description of today's cultures as islands or spheres is factually incorrect and normatively deceptive. Our cultures de facto no longer have the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness, but are characterized through to the core by mixing and permeations.[25] I call this new form of cultures transcultural, since it goes *beyond* the traditional concept of culture and *passes through* traditional cultural boundaries as a matter of course. The concept of transculturality – which I now want to set out – seeks to articulate this altered cultural constitution.[26,27]

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[25] We are mistaken when we continue to speak of German, French, Japanese, Indian, etc. cultures as if these were clearly definied and closed entities; what we really have in mind when speaking this way are *political* or *linguistic* communities, not actual *cultural* formations.

[26] The prefix 'trans' in 'transculturality' has a double meaning. First it denotes the fact that the determinants of culture are becoming more and more cross-cultural. In this sense 'trans' has the meaning 'transversal'. In the long run, however, this development will increasingly engender a cultural constitution which is beyond the traditional, supposedly monocultural design of cultures. So, whilst having the meaning 'transversal' with respect to the mixed design of cultural determinants, 'trans' has the sense of 'beyond' with respect to the future and compared to the earlier form of cultures.

[27] I must admit that I held the term 'transculturality' for a new one when I began working on this topic in 1991. Transversality – which I'd spoken of previously only with an eye to questions of reason (for the first time in my *Unsere postmoderne Moderne* Weinheim: VCH Acta humaniora, 1987, Chap. XI; most recently in: Welsch, *Vernunft. Die zeitgenössische Vernunftkritik und das Konzept der transversalen Vernunft.* Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1995, stw 1996) – now in cultural theory too – this was my idea. In the meantime I have learned that 'transculturality' – or at least the adjective 'transcultural' – isn't quite so rare after all. But my usage of the term does not, as is usual in an older tradition, target transcultural invariances. With this term I seek far more to account for the historically modified structure of *today's* cultures.

III. Transculturality

1. Macrolevel: the altered cut of today's cultures

a. Networking

Firstly the old homogenizing and separatist idea of cultures has been surpassed through *cultures' external networking.* Cultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other. Lifestyles no longer end at the borders of national cultures, but go beyond these, are found in the same way in other cultures. The way of life for an economist, an academic or a journalist is no longer German or French, but rather European or global in tone. The new forms of entanglement are a consequence of migratory processes, as well as of worldwide material and immaterial communications systems and economic interdependencies and dependencies. It is here, of course, that questions of power come in.

A consequence and sign of such permeations is the fact that the same basic problems and states of consciousness today appear in cultures once considered to be fundamentally different – think, for example, of human rights debates, feminist movements or of ecological awareness which are powerful active factors across the board culturally.[28] According to the old model of culture and its fiction of difference things such as these would have been quite impossible – which in turn is evidence of the obsolescence of this model.

b. Hybridization

Secondly, cultures today are in general characterized by *hybridization.* For *every* culture, all *other* cultures have tendencially come to be inner-content or satellites. This applies on the levels of population, merchandise and information. Worldwide, in most countries, live members of all other countries of this planet; and more and more the same articles – as exotic as they may once have been – are becoming available the world over; finally the global networking of communications technology makes all kinds of information identically available from every point in space.[29]

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[28] This is not a straightforward matter of exporting Western ideas, rather retroactive modifications also come about: The affirmation of property, for example, which Indian women's rights campaigners said represented an indispensable prerequisite for their emancipation, has caused some Western critics of private property to think again. – I owe this observation to Martha C. Nussbaum.

[29] Places like Mammoth – a Californian ski station, where you find numerous names such as St. Moritz Road, Chamonix Place, Cortina Circuit, or Megeve Way (in the surroundings you also have a Matterhorn Peak) are curious examples of the trend to

c. Comprehensiveness of the cultural changes

Cultural mixing occurs not only – as is often too one-sidely stated – on the low level of Coke, McDonalds, MTV or CNN, but in high culture as well, and this has been the case for a long time – think, for example, of Puccini and Chinese music; of Gauguin and Tahiti; of Picasso and African sculpture; or of Messiaen and India. Moreover, culture in the sense of forms of life, of daily routine is more and more becoming cross-cultural too. Germans, for example, today have implemented more elements of French and Italian lifestyle than ever before – even Germans today know how to enjoy life.

d. Dissolution of the foreign-own distinction

Strictly speaking there is no longer anything absolutely foreign. Everything is within reach. Accordingly, there is no longer anything exclusively 'own' either. Authenticity has become folklore, it is ownness simulated for others – to whom the indigene himself belongs.[30]

I want to provide two examples. These days it is supermarket products, telecommunications articles and T-shirts from famous universities above all that belong to potlatch – the ritual of exchange and waste among today's successors of native North Americans. Representatives of Indian culture themselves consider it highly questionable that their ancestors would still recognize today's customs as a continuation of the old rituals. But this doesn't worry them. They seize the foreign as their own. As can be seen, transculturality can reach all the way down to the most emphatic rituals of identity.

But while these First Nation People are still aware of the orginally heterogenous source of the articles named, this often no longer seems to be the case in Japan. There the foreign is considered the own as a matter of course. In Kyoto, accompanied by Japanese friends, I entered a restaurant in which everything appeared genuinely Japanese and asked my companions

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hybridization. One has the whole world (insofar as it counts for a specific purpose) in one place.

[30] The rhetoric of regional cultures is largely simulatory and aesthetic; in substance most things are transculturally determined. What's regionally specific has become décor, superficies, aesthetic enactment. This is, of course, one of the reasons for the eminent spread of the aesthetic noticable today (cf. *Die Aktualität des Ästhetischen*, ed. Wolfgang Welsch, Munich: Fink, 1993). – One might, just once, seek out a Tirolean ski resort: Tirolean merely exists still as atmospheric enactment, as ornamentation. On the other hand, the basic structures – from the ski lifts through to the toilets – are exactly similar to those in French ski regions or at international airports. Significantly, the cuisine too has changed. What is put before one, looks like and calls itself Tirolean Gröstl, Kasnocken or Schupfnudeln, but it is – corresponding with international standards – drastically calorie-reduced. In short: The appearance is still Tirolean, but in substance everything has changed. Originality exists only as an aesthetic production.

whether everything here really was completely Japanese, including the chairs which we had just sat down on. They seemed astonished by the question, almost annoyed, and hastily assured me that everything there – including the chairs – was completely Japanese. But I knew the chairs: they were a model "Cab", designed by Mario Bellini and produced by Cassina in Milan. I didn't then ask the next question – whether the crockery was completely Japanese (we were eating from Suomi series plates produced by Rosenthal). – It's not that European furniture should be found here that's astonishing, but that the Japanese held them to be products of their own culture. That the foreign and own has become indistiguishable for them serves witness to the degree of factual transculturality.

Expressed as a principle this means: The selectivity between own-culture and foreign culture is gone.[31] Today in a culture's internal relations – among its different ways of life – there exists as much foreignness as in its external relations with other cultures.[32]

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[31] Incidentally, this is also reflected in a famous theorem within analytic philosophy. According to Quine and Davidson, the problem of translation *between different* societies and languages is structurally no different and in no way greater or more dramatic than within *one and the same* society and language. Rorty comments: "Part of the force of Quine's and Davidson's attack on the distinction between the conceptual and the empirical is that the distinction between different cultures does not differ in kind from the distinction between different theories held by members of a single culture. The Tasmanian aborigines and the British colonists had trouble communicating, but this trouble was different only in extent from the difficulties in communication experienced by Gladstone and Disraeli. [...] The same Quinean arguments which dispose of the positivists' distinction between analytic and synthetic truth dispose of the anthropologists' distinction between the intercultural and the intracultural" (Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity", in: *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 21-34, here p. 26).

[32] Sociologically viewed, this is a familiar fact today: "[...] people belong to many different cultures and the cultural differences are as likely to be *within* states (i.e. between regions, classes, ethnic groups, the urban and rural) as *between* states" (Anthony King, "Architecture, Capital and the Globalization of Culture", in: *Global Culture: Nationalism, globalization and modernity*, A Theory, Culture & Society special issue, ed. Mike Featherstone, London: Sage, 1990, pp. 397-411, here p. 409). "[...] cultural diversity tends now to be as great within nations as it is between them" (Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity. Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 231). "It is natural that in the contemporary world many local settings are increasingly characterized by cultural diversity. [...] and one may in the end ask whether it is now even possible to become a cosmopolitan without going away at all" (Ulf Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture", in: *Global Culture: Nationalism, globalization and modernity*, pp. 237-251, here p. 249).

2. Microlevel: transcultural formation of individuals

a. Several cultural origins

Transculturality is gaining ground moreover not only on the macro-cultural level, but also on the individual's microlevel. For most of us, multiple cultural connexions are decisive in terms of our cultural formation. We are cultural hybrids. Today's writers, for example, emphasize that they're shaped not by a single homeland, but by differing reference countries, by Russian, German, South and North American or Japanese literature. Today this applies not only for advocates of high-culture, but increasingly for everyone. Since the Germans have been travelling *en masse* to hot countries, as studies show, their attitude to summer days earlier considered unbearably hot has changed significantly; all of a sudden people enjoy these days. Or if you speak to the chefs of a completely normal restaurant: they can explain to you how our taste has changed within the last twenty years, how much of what was once exotic is considered normal as a matter of course. Or think of young people and how they are shaped by pop and music culture: role-models can no longer be sorted nationally at all. In this way transculturality is today advancing in the most natural manner and is determining the formation of individuals' cultural identity. The cultural formation of subsequent generations will presumably be even more strongly transculturally shaped.[33]

b. Sociological diagnoses

Sociologists have been telling us since the seventies that modern lives are to be understood "as a migration through different social worlds and as the successive realization of a number of possible identities",[34] and that we all possess "multiple attachments and identities" – "cross-cutting identities", as Bell put it.[35]

Even in the thirties Paul Valéry had already pointed out that external social pluralization also brings about an internal pluralization of the individual;[36] and the Chicago sociologists praised then the advantages of a

[33] Amy Gutmann states that today "most people's identities, not just Western intellectuals or elites, are shaped by more than a single culture. Not only societies, but people are multicultural" (Amy Gutmann, "The Challenge of Multiculturalism in Political Ethics", in: *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 22, no. 3 [1993], pp. 171-206, here p. 183).

[34] Peter L. Berger, Brigitte Berger, Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind. Modernization and Consciousness*, New York: Random House, 1973, p. 77.

[35] Daniel Bell, *The Winding Passage. Essays and Sociological Journeys 1960-1980*, Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Books, 1980, p. 243.

[36] According to him the present-day means a state in which "a series of doctrines, schools of thought and 'truths', which vary greatly amongst themselves, or are even

multiple or fragmented self for urban life, as Richard Sennett has recently pointed out.[37] "By virtue of his different interests arising out of different aspects of social life, the individual acquires membership in widely divergent groups", said Louis Wirth.[38] "A fragmented self is more responsive".[39]

c. Historical precursors

Such internal multiplicity which is rapidly increasing in modernity and postmodernity, is of course not totally new. Montaigne had already confessed: "I have nothing to say about myself absolutely, simply, and solidly, without confusion and without mixture, or in one word."[40] "We are all patchwork, and so shapeless and diverse in composition that each bit, each moment, plays its own game."[41] Novalis declared that one person is "several people at once" since "*pluralism*" is "our innermost essence".[42] Nietzsche said of himself that he was "glad to harbour [...] not ‚one immortal soul', but *many mortal souls* within",[43] and he coined the formula of the "subject as a multitude" in general.[44] Or remember Walt Whitman's "I am large ... I contain multitudes"[45] or

completely contradictory, are acknowledged in equal measure" and even – this is decisive – "exist alongside one another and act within the same individuals" (Paul Valéry, "Triomphe de Manet", *Œuvres*, II, Paris: Gallimard, 1960, pp. 1326-1333, here p. 1327). Today "in all cultivated minds" there exist "the most varying of ideas and opposing principles of life and cognition freely alongside one another [...]." "The majority of us will have several views about the same object, which easily alternate with one another in judgments" (Paul Valéry, "La crise de l'esprit", *Œuvres*, I, Paris: Gallimard, 1957, pp. 988-1014, here p. 992; Valéry, "La politique de l'esprit", pp. 1014-1040, here p. 1017). Already in 1890 Valéry had written to his friend Pierre Louis "je crois plus que jamais que je suis *plusieurs*!" (Paul Valéry, Letter of 30 August 1890, in: *Lettres à quelques-uns*, Paris: Gallimard, 1952, p. 17 f., here p. 18).

[37] Cf. Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: Norton, 1992), p. 127.

[38] Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life" [1938], in: *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities*, ed. Richard Sennett (New York: Prentice Hall, 1969), p. 156.

[39] Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, p. 127.

[40] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 242 [II 1].

[41] Ibid., p. 244.

[42] Novalis, *Schriften*, eds Paul Kluckhohn and Richard Samuel, vol. 3: *Das philosophische Werk II* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1983), p. 571 [107] and p. 250 [63] resp.

[43] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches. Ein Buch für freie Geister. Zweiter Band*, in: *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, eds Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980), vol. 2, p. 386 [II 17].

[44] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente. Juli 1882 bis Herbst 1885*, in: *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 11, p. 650 [August – September 1885].

[45] Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* ["Song of Myself"], 1855 (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 84 [1314-1316].

Rimbaud's "JE est un autre".[46] Today what once applied to outstanding persons only seems to be becoming the structure of almost everybody.[47]

d. Cultural identity in contrast to national identity

A cultural identity of this type is, of course, not to be equated with national identity. The distinction between cultural and national identity is of elementary importance. It belongs among the mustiest assumptions that an individual's cultural formation must be determined by his nationality or national status. The insinuation that someone who possesses a Japanese, an Indian or a German passport must also culturally unequivocally be Japanese, an Indian or a German and that otherwise he's some guy without a fatherland, or a traitor to his fatherland, is as foolish as it is dangerous.[48] The detachment of civic from personal or cultural identity is to be insisted upon – all the more so in states, such as ours, in which freedom in cultural formation belongs among one's basic rights.[49]

Wherever an individual is cast by differing cultural references, the linking of its transcultural components with one another becomes a specific task in identity-forming. Work on one's identity is increasingly becoming work on the integration of components of differing cultural origin.[50] And only the ability to transculturally cross over will guarantee us identity and competence in the long run.[51]

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[46] Arthur Rimbaud, Letter to Paul Demeny [May 15, 1871], in: *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), pp. 249-254, here p. 250).

[47] Vgl. zum Thema des pluralen Subjekts Verf., "Subjektsein heute – Überlegungen zur Transformation des Subjekts", *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 39. Jg. (1991), Heft 4, 347-365; ferner: *Vernunft. Die zeitgenössische Vernunftkritik und das Konzept der transversalen Vernunft* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1995), Zweiter Teil, Kap. XIV: "Transversalität und Subjektivität", 829-852.

[48] This insinuation stems from the classical concept of culture in so far as this is folk-based and commands homogeneity.

[49] Of course, civic and cultural identity can overlap. In many cases they will. The point is that they are not to be *equated.*

[50] Zehra Çirak, a Turkish born writer who has lived in Germany since the age of two, says on this: "I prefer neither my Turkish nor my German culture. I live and long for a mixed culture" (Zehra Çirak, *Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten*, Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1991, p. 94).

[51] Cf. my *Vernunft: Die zeitgenössische Vernunftkritik und das Konzept der transversalen Vernunft*, especially pp. 829-852.

3. Intermediate summary

To sum this up: Cultural determinants today – from society's macrolevel through to individuals' microlevel – have become transcultural. The old concept of culture has become completely inappropriate. It misrepresents cultures' actual form, the type of their relations and the structure of individuals' identities and lifestyles.[52] Every concept of culture intended to pertain to today's reality must face up to the transcultural constitution.[53,54] The gesture made by some cultural theorists, who prefer to cling to their customary

[52] Wherever this concept continues to be represented, it acts as a normative corset, as a coercive homogenization precept.

[53] Ulf Hannerz' concept (or "root metaphor") of "creole cultures" and "creolization" is quite close to my perspective of transculturality. "Creole cultures come out of multidimensional cultural encounters and can put things together in new ways" (Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity*, p. 265). "Something like creole cultures", Hannerz suggests, "may have a larger part in our future than cultures designed, each by itself, to be pieces of a mosaic" (ibid., p. 267). In 1991 Michel Serres held an impressive plea in the spirit of transculturality (Michel Serres, *Le Tiers-Instruit*, Paris: Éditions François Bourin, 1991). His thesis is that what matters for present-day culture and education is to transcend the traditional alternatives of own and foreign and to think in terms of intersection, mixing and penetration. Whoever wants to move in the present-day world must be able to deal with a medley of cultural patterns.

[54] A further conceptual clarification may be helpful. The diagnosis of transculturality refers to a transition, or to a phase in a process of transition. It's a temporary diagnosis. It takes the old conception of single cultures as its point of departure, and it argues that this conception – although still seeming self-evident to many people – is no longer descriptively adequate for most cultures today. Instead, the diagnosis of transculturality views a present and future state of cultures which is no longer monocultural but cross-cultural. The concept seeks to conceptually grasp this transition. One point, however, might seem confusing in this talk of transculturality. It may appear contradictory that the concept of transculturality which points to a disappearance of the traditional single cultures nonetheless inherently continues to refer to 'cultures', and to a certain extent even seems to presuppose the ongoing existence of such cultures – for if there were no longer such cultures, where should the transcultural mixers take their components from? The point can easily be clarified. The process of transition obviously implies *two* moments: the ongoing existence of single cultures (or of an old understanding of culture's form) *and* the shift to a new, transcultural form of cultures. With respect to this double character of the transition, it is conceptually sound and even necessary to refer to single cultures of the old type *as well as* to point the way to transculturality. But what will be the case after the transition has been made? Won't it, at least then, be contradictory to continue speaking of 'cultures' on the one hand and of 'transculturality' on the other? Not at all. Because the activity of weaving new webs will, of course, continue to take existing cultures as its starting-point or reservoir for the development of further webs – but now these reference cultures themselves will already have a transcultural cut. The duo of reference cultures on the one hand and new cultural webs on the other remains, the difference however is that the reference cultures will now already be 'cultural' in the sense of 'transcultural'.

concepts and, wherever reality doesn't yield to these, retreat to a "well so much the worse for reality", is ridiculous.

IV. Supplements and outlooks

Having so far developed the general features of transculturality, I would now like to append some supplemental viewpoints and prospects.

1. Transculturality – already in history

First: Transculturality is in no way completely new historically. It has, to be sure, been the case to a larger extent than the adherents of the traditional concept of culture want to admit. They blindly deny the factual historic transculturality of long periods in order to establish the nineteenth century's imaginary notion of homogeneous national cultures. – Take whatever culture you want as example. Take your own or, for instance, Japanese culture: It obviously cannot be reconstructed without taking Chinese and Korean, Indian, Hellenistic or modern European culture into account.

Carl Zuckmayer once wonderfully described historical transculturality in *The Devil's General*: "[...] just imagine your line of ancestry, from the birth of Christ on. There was a Roman commander, a dark type, brown like a ripe olive, he had taught a blond girl Latin. And then a Jewish spice dealer came into the family, he was a serious person, who became a Christian before his marriage and founded the house's Catholic tradition. – And then came a Greek doctor, or a Celtic legionary, a Grisonian landsknecht, a Swedish horseman, a Napoleonic soldier, a deserted Cossack, a Black Forest miner, a wandering miller's boy from the Alsace, a fat mariner from Holland, a Magyar, a pandour, a Viennese officer, a French actor, a Bohemian musician – all lived on the Rhine, brawled, boozed, and sang and begot children there – and – Goethe, he was from the same pot, and Beethoven, and Gutenberg, and Mathias Grünewald, and – oh, whatever – just look in the encyclopaedia. They were the best, my dear! The world's best! And why? Because that's where the peoples intermixed. Intermixed – like the waters from sources, streams and rivers, so, that they run together to a great, living torrent".[55] – This is a realistic description of a 'folk's' historical genesis and constitution. It breaks

[55] Carl Zuckmayer, *The Devil's General*, in: *Masters of Modern Drama* (New York: Random House, 1963), pp. 911-958, here p. 930 [translation modified].

through the fiction of homogeneity and the separatist idea of culture as decreed by the traditional concept.

For everyone who knows their European history – and art history in particular – this historical transculturality is evident. Styles developed across the countries and nations, and many artists created their best works far from home. Albrecht Dürer, who is considered an exemplary German artist, first found himself in Italy, and he had to seek out Venice a second time in order to become himself completely. The cultural trends were largely European and shaped a network linking the states.[56] In general, Edward Said's observation holds: "All cultures are hybrid; none of them is pure; none of them is identical to a 'pure' folk; none of them consists of a homogenous fabric."[57]

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[56] Recently the exhibition "Il Rinascimento a Venezia e la pittura del Nord ai tempi di Bellini, Dürer, Tiziano" (Venice, Palazzo Grassi, 1999) caused a stir by getting by completely without "national identity determinations and dues" (Matin Warnke) – it was guided by the way things were, by the many influences and mixtures.

[57] Edward W. Said: "Kultur und Identität – Europas Selbstfindung aus der Einverleibung der Welt", *Lettre International* 34 (1996), pp. 21-25, here p. 24. In the same spirit Wolf Lepenies has said: "There are now only hybrid cultures" (Wolf Lepenies, "Das Ende der Überheblichkeit", in: *Die ZEIT*, no. 48, 24 Nov. 1995, p. 62). Similarly, from a philosophical point of view, J. N. Mohanty stated, "that talk of a culture which evokes the idea of a homogeneous form is completely misleading. Indian culture, or Hindu culture consists of completely different cultures. [...] A completely homogeneous subculture is not to be found" (Jitendra N. Mohanty, "Den anderen verstehen", in: *Philosophische Grundlagen der Interkulturalität*, pp. 115-122, here p. 118). Mohanty also notes generally: "The idea of cultural purity is a myth" (ibid., p. 117). Jacques Derrida notes: "*It is peculiar to a culture, that it is never identical with itself.* There is no culture and no cultural identity without this difference *towards itself*" (Jacques Derrida, "Das andere Kap", in: *Das andere Kap. Die vertagte Demokratie – Zwei Essays zu Europa*, Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1992, pp. 9-80, here p. 12 f.) Rémi Brague has pointed out how European identity is characterized by the sense of its distance from a double origin: "What's specific to European identity lies in its 'cultural secondariness': in the knowledge of its not being original, but having before it something else, something prior – culturally Greek antiquity, religiously Judaism" (Rémi Brague, *Europa – Eine exzentrische Identität*, Frankfurt-Main/New York: Campus 1993). – As soon as one observes the cultural fictions of purity more closely and realistically, they rapidly break up into a series of transcultural entanglements. Traditionally, and at least in the occident, mixtures of peoples came about particularly through conquest. In this, aspects of a conquered culture were integrated in the new, hegemonic culture. "Santa Maria sopra Minerva" is the formula for such processes. The difference to today lies in that the present-day blending has little to do with territorial, political expansions or conquests: It is far more a matter of transversal cultural interchange processes.

2. Cultural conceptions as active factors in respect of their object

Conceptions of culture are not just descriptive concepts, but operative concepts.[58] Our understanding of culture is an important *active factor* in our cultural life.

If one tells us (as the old concept of culture did) that culture is to be a homogeneity event, then we practice the required coercions and exclusions. We seek to satisfy the task we are set – and will be successful in so doing. Whereas, if one tells us or subsequent generations that culture ought to incorporate the foreign and do justice to transcultural components, then we will set about this task, and then corresponding feats of integration will belong to the real structure of our culture. The 'reality' of culture is, in this sense, always a consequence too of our conceptions of culture.

One must therefore be aware of the responsibility which one takes on in propagandizing concepts of this type. We should be suggesting concepts which are descriptively adequate and normatively accountable, and which – above all – pragmatically lead further.[59] Propagandizing the old concept of culture and its subsequent forms has today become irresponsible; better chances are found on the side of the concept of transculturality.

3. Annexability and transmutability

The concept of transculturality aims for a multi-meshed and inclusive, not separatist and exclusive understanding of culture. It intends a culture and society whose pragmatic feats exist not in delimitation, but in the ability to link and undergo transition. In meeting with other forms of life there are

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[58] Generally, concepts are schemata, with which we make our world understandable for ourselves and organize our actions. They preset grids and ways of viewing things which entail behavioral patterns and disturb facts. In this light, Deleuze determined the task of philosophy as being the creation of concepts: "La philosophie [...] est la discipline qui consiste à *créer* des concepts" (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1991, p. 10).

[59] Hence critical reflections on cultural concepts, such as I undertake here, are – from time to time at least – necessary. No one would claim that an alteration of the concept *eo ipso* already alters reality. That would be overly simplistic idealism. But, conversely, the way in which the conscious and subconscious effectuality of cultural terms codetermines cultural reality should not be overlooked. The subcutaneous and officious effectuality of the old concept of culture – one thinks automatically, or even states explicitly that culture is to be homogeneous, national etc. – contributes to separatisms and particularisms of the obsolete sort. Work on conceptual enlightenment is called for to counter this.

always not only divergences but opportunities to link up, and these can be developed and extended so that a common form of life is fashioned which includes even reserves which hadn't earlier seemed capable of being linked in. Extensions of this type represent a pressing task today.

It is a matter of readjusting our inner compass: away from the concentration on the polarity of the own and the foreign to an attentiveness for what might be common and connective wherever we encounter things foreign.

Transculturality sometimes demands things that may seem unreasonable for our esteemed habits – as does today's reality everywhere. But transculturality also contains the potential to transcend our received and supposedly determining monocultural standpoints, and we should make increasing use of these potentials. Diane Ravitch – an American critic of separatistic multiculturalism – reports an interesting example: In an interview a black runner said "that her model is Mikhail Baryshnikov. She admires him because he is a magnificent athlete". Diane Ravitch comments: "He is not black; he is not female; he is not American-born; he is not even a runner. But he inspires her because of the way he trained and used his body. When I read this, I thought how narrow-minded it is to believe that people can be inspired *only* by those who are exactly like them in race and ethnicity".[60] – Once again: We can and should transcend the narrowness of traditional, monocultural ideas and constraints, we can develop an increasingly transcultural understanding of ourselves. I am confident that future generations will more and more develop such transcultural forms of communication and comprehension.[61]

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[60] Diane Ravitch, "Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Plures", p. 354.

[61] Incidentally, it is not only recent developments in the constitution of cultures, but in the same way in science and with day-to-day problems which make an analogous transition to thought forms of mixing necessary for us. They call for a shift away from the old preference for clean separation, division of the world and unilinear analysis and for a transition to web-like, entangled, networked thought forms (I have set this out in more detail in my *Vernunft*). Thus in reality too we are finding ourselves confronted more and more with issues which result from networking effects. Even when problems arise locally their effects transcend borders, become global. Our old separatist thought forms however are unsuited to react to this. For them such transcending of borders is merely an "undesired side effect" – which you accept with a shrug of the shoulders and which you are helplessly confronted with. But of course it appears only to be a "side effect" because one has thought separatistically in the outset. The causal chains of reality however do not stop at this small-minded desire for division. Hence we must shift away from separative thinking and make the transition to thought forms of entanglement in economic, ecological, and all questions of planning.

4. Internal and external transculturality

Furthermore, the individuals' discovery and acceptance of their transcultural constitution is a condition for coming to terms with societal transculturality. Hatred directed towards foreigners is (as has been shown particularly from the psychoanalytic side) basically projected hatred of oneself. One takes exception vicariously to something in a stranger, which one carries within oneself, but does not like to admit, preferring rather to repress it internally and to battle with it externally.[62]

Julia Kristeva writes: "In a strange way, the stranger exists within ourselves: he is the hidden face of our identity [...] If we recognize him within ourselves, we prevent ourselves from abhoring him as such."[63] Indeed she also states a precondition for this recognition of the stranger within oneself: "Those who've never lost any of their roots, seem incapable of apprehending any word which could relativize their position. [...] The ear opens itself to objections only when the body loses the ground beneath its feet. To hear a dissonnance, one must have experienced a sort of imbalance, a tottering upon an abyss."[64]

Perhaps that sounds more dramatic than it is. For who today could be so conceited as to consider their roots to be the only ones possible? Not even to value his own roots does he have to do this. It is quite the reverse: insight into the specificity of these roots makes it possible to justify their particular estimation. But one cannot then simultaneously present them as being the best roots of all humankind altogether (with most others simply not having had the luck to receive these roots in the cradle). One's own roots are roots *for oneself* – not for everyone. Others can and may well value their own roots in the same way. The preference of one's own origin at the same time logically demands recognition, although not necessarily the adoption of other possible

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[62] Freud had already pointed to an analogy between the inner topology of repression and the outer topology of the relation to strangers: "[...] the repressed is foreign territory to the ego – internal foreign territory – just as reality (if you will forgive the unusual expression) is external foreign territory" (Sigmund Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis", in: Freud, *The Standard Edition*, ed. James Strachey, vol. XXII, London: Hogarth, 1973, pp. 5-184, here p. 57 (31st Lecture). Musil has clearly recognized the mechanism of projection of disinclinations: "Now, ethnic prejudice is usually nothing more than self-hatred, dredged up from the murky depths of one's own conflicts and projected onto some convenient victim, a traditional practice from time immemorial" (Robert Musil, *The Man without Qualities*, trans. Sophie Wilkins, New York: Knopf, 1995, vol. I, p. 461). "[...] the good Christian projects his own faults onto the good Jew, whom he accuses of seducing him into committing advertisements, high interest rates, newspapers, and all that sort of thing" (ibid., p. 559).

[63] Julia Kristeva, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), p. 9.

[64] Ibid., p. 29 f.

origins. One should remind oneself of this precisely in one's weak moments, those in which one might be in danger of drifting into the trap of making claims to exclusivity.

Against such temptations I would like to remind you of an inheritance of our tradition: in Greek ξένος meant both the stranger and guest. In other words, strangers were welcome as a matter of course. – If one is to appeal to European tradition at all, then please to this one too.

It is precisely when we no longer deny, but rather perceive, our inner transculturality, that we will become capable of dealing with outer transculturality.

5. Transculturality = uniformization?

Let me turn to a penultimate point. It's a crucial one. I want to respond to a potential misunderstanding. One might think that the concept of transculturality simply means and recommends the acceptance of an increasing homogenization of cultures and the coming of a uniform world-civilization, whereas it does not care about cultural diversity and its disappearance. But this is not the case at all. Transculturality does not mean simple uniformization. It is even intrinsically linked with the production of new diversity. For two aspects need to be distinguished.

First of all, it is indeed the case that cultural diversity in the old sense is diminishing. Today's and tomorrow's cultures will no longer be homogeneous, monolithic, clearly delimited (neither factually, nor in their own understanding of themselves). It is just this which comprises the content of the transculturality diagnosis.

But even with regard to this uniformization one should not only see gray. Whereas uniformization brings with it cultural losses on the one hand, greater communicability between people of different origins – as is seen particularly in the younger generation – ensues in its wake. Understanding each other is becoming more a matter of course and it is becoming easier to get on with each other in everyday life than was the case in any earlier generation. These could be signs of the formation of a world-internal society. The uniformization processes might perhaps lead us close to the old dream of a Family of Man and of a peaceful global society. *For this* one might very well accept some losses at other levels.

As transculturality pushes forward, diversity does not simply vanish, but its mode is altered. Diversity, as traditionally provided in the form of single cultures, does indeed disappear increasingly. Instead, however, a new type of

diversity takes shape: the diversity of different cultures and forms of life, each arising from transcultural permeations and exhibiting a transcultural cut.

Consider just how these transcultural formations come about. Different groups or individuals which give shape to new transcultural patterns draw upon different sources for this purpose. Hence the transcultural networks they are shaping will vary already in their inventory; and they will do so even more in their structure, because even the same elements, when put together differently, result in different structures. The transcultural webs are woven with different threads, and in different manner. Therefore, on the level of transculturality, a high degree of cultural manifoldness arises once again – certainly no less than that which was found between traditional single cultures.[65] It's just that now the differences no longer exist between clearly delineated cultures, but result between transcultural networks of identity which are no longer bound to geographical or national stipulations. The new situation can be described as follows: the same or similar identity networks can turn up at different places in this world; at the same time quite different forms of identity can exist in the same place. Neither would be possible according to the old, monocultural model. This shows once again the extent of the changes that are linked with transculturality.

All of this applies not only on the level of groups, but already on that of individuals. The global spread of the same content and signs in no way means the inception of a uniform human. Instead selective screening is often carried out quite differently, as is additionally the attribution of meaning. Even someone who makes the same selections as another person can give the chosen elements a quite different meaning in his cultural cosmos from those of the other.[66] Hence instead of a purported uniformity there exists from now on a diverse network of common features and differences between individuals.[67]

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[65] Similar views to mine are forwarded by Ulf Hannerz who says "that the flow of culture between countries and continents may result in another diversity of culture, based more on interconnections than on autonomy" (Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity*, p. 266) and by Mike Featherstone, who argues "against those who would wish to present the tendency on the global level to be one of cultural integration and homogenization" (Mike Featherstone, *Consumer culture & postmodernism*, London: Sage, 1991, p. 146).

[66] "Even if the possibility of global communication has come about among young people and changed societies throughout the world, this doesn't mean that the uniform young person has now made its entry on the world stage. A global semiotic community has arisen, but the signs have manifold meaning" (Reinhold Görling, *Heterotopia. Lektüren einer interkulturellen Literaturwissenschaft*, Munich: Fink, 1997, p. 37).

[67] Max Scheler had already pointed out the simultaneity of the adjustment between cultures and the increase in individual differentiation. He did this in a 1927 lecture entitled "Man in the Era of Adjustment" (in: Max Scheler, *Philosophical Perspectives*, Boston: Beacon,

This new type of cultural diversity exhibits a great advantage over the old one. Transcultural networks always have some elements in common while differing in others, meaning that there exist between them not only differences, but at the same time overlaps. Since they include parts which also occur in other networks, they are altogether more capable of affiliation amongst one another than the old cultural identities ever were. So in terms of its structure the new type of difference favors coexistence rather than conflict. Forms differing transculturally are free from the old problems of *separatistic* difference.

6. Comparing the concept of transculturality to the gloabalization and particularization diagnoses

To conclude, I'd like to compare the concept of transculturality with two other concepts which are much talked about today: the concept of globalization and that of particularization. My thesis is that these concepts are too one-sided, and that particularization is a wrong, yet understandable reaction to the likewise insufficient globalization diagnosis. The transculturality concept however, it seems to me, is able to fulfill the legitimate demands of both competing concepts, because it explains uniformitarian processes on the one side and the emergence of new diversity on the other side within a single framework.

The concept of globalization assumes that cultures are becoming the same the world over.[68] Globalization is obviously a concept of uniformization (preferably following the Western model) – and of uniformization alone. But this view can, at best, represent half the picture, and the champions of globalization must be having a hard time ignoring the complementary resurgence of particularisms worldwide.[69] Their concept, however, is by its

1958, pp. 94-126). Scheler denoted the "adjustment" as the "inclusive trend of this era" (p. 102).

[68] Cf. *Global Culture: Nationalism, globalization and modernity.*

[69] Incidentally, it is by no means evident that globalization processes are correctly defined when they are only described as unilinear expansion of Western culture. One would, at the same time, have to be attentive to considerable alterations which the elements of the initial culture experience in their acquisition. Stephen Greenblatt has pointed out such ambiguities in the "assimilation of the other". He describes this, for instance, in the way the inhabitants of Bali deal with video technology in a ritual context: "if the television and the VCR [...] suggested the astonishing pervasiveness of capitalist markets and technology, [...] the Balinese adaptation of the latest Western and Japanese modes of representation seemed so culturally idiosyncratic and resilient that it was unclear who

very structure incapable of developing an adequate understanding of these counter-tendencies. From the viewpoint of globalization, particularisms are just phenomena which are retrograde and whose destiny it is to vanish.

But particularisms cannot in fact be ignored. The "return to tribes" is shaping the state of the world just as much as the trend towards a world society.[70] In my understanding – and that of many others – this rise in particularisms is a reaction to globalization processes.[71] Tribalism fights globalism.[72] This certainly creates an explosive situation, because the particularisms often refine themselves through the appeal to cultural identity to nationalisms or fundamentalisms producing hatred, ethnic cleansing actions and war.[73] Enlightenment people don't like these particularisms, and this too

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was assimilating whom" (Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991, p. 4). Hence not even with respect to economy – its paradigm sphere – does the globalization diagnosis seem to be fully appropriate. – Ulf Hannerz discusses similar phenomena under the heading "creolization": the uniform trends of a 'world culture', he demonstrates, are quickly bound into national or regional cultural profiles and thereby experience considerable diversification and transformation (cf. Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity*, esp. p. 264 ff.).

[70] Recent years – especially where hegemonic superstructures have broken down – have often seen the emergence of small-state constructs. Moreover on a higher level, beyond the particular cultures, large cultural alliances are forming which appeal to a cultural commonality – often one religiously based – and want to assert it politically. Samuel P. Huntington calls these large alliances 'civilizations' and outlines the future scenario of a "clash of civilizations" (Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?", in: *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, 72/3, pp. 22-49).

[71] Cf. Roland Robertson, "Globalization Theory and Civilizational Analysis", in: *Comparative Civilizations Review* 17, 1987, pp. 20-30.

[72] Cf. Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, New York: Ballantine, 1996.

[73] As understandable as it may be to recur to the resources of cultural identity (to the "roots") in a situation of oppression from outside, since they represent a potential for resistance to foreign domination, the consequences are just awkward when the basis of resistance is retained unaltered at the moment of its victory and made the new state's *raison d'être*. It is then, under the appeal to cultural identity, that reactionary, anti-pluralist and tendencially totalitarian states come about. They exercise inner oppression just as they had previously been oppressed from the outside. This danger was pointed out by Jean François Lyotard: "Proud struggles for independence end in young, reactionary States" (Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1988, p. 181 [262]). Over the past few decades this has been observable repeatedly in Africa and most recently in the disintegration of the Eastern sphere of power. Nation states arose with exorbitant fictions of inner homogeneity and defences against outer heterogeneity (cf. Ralf Dahrendorf, "Europa der Regionen?", in: *Merkur* 509, August 1991, pp. 703-706, here p. 704). Already Popper, as early as 1945, had warned that the recourse to roots and tribes would lead to inner dictatorship: "The more we try to return to the heroic age of tribalism, the more surely do we arrive at the Inquisition, at the Secret Police, and at a romanticized gangsterism" (Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950, p. 195).

is quite understandable. But it is not sufficient. As concerning as one may find these phenomena, we won't be able to get by without taking seriously the demand for a specific identity. People obviously feel compelled to defend themselves against being merged into globalized uniformity. They don't want just to be universal or global, but also specific and of their own. They want to distinguish themselves from one another and know themselves to be well accommodated in a specific identity. This desire is legitimate, and forms in which it can be satisfied undangerously should be determined and promoted.[74] Future cultural forms will have to be such that they also cater for the demand for specifity.

This makes clear the advantage of the transculturality concept over the competing concepts of globalization and particularization. The concept of transculturality goes beyond these seemingly hard – but all-too one-sided – alternatives. It is able to cover both global and local, universalistic and particularistic aspects, and it does so quite naturally, in terms of the logic of transcultural processes themselves. Globalizing tendencies as well as the desire for specifity and particularity can be fulfilled *within* transculturality. Transcultural identities comprehend a cosmopolitan side, but also a side of local affiliation.[75] Transcultural people combine both.

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[74] In so doing, every more detailed look at particularisms – at their motives and their problems – shows that they will be capable of remaining stable to some extent only when they face up to the demands of plurality and the constitution of transculturality. They are internally affected by both in several ways. Firstly, this is evident on the motivational level: the new particularisms obviously react to the overcoming of traditional identities by processes of cultural crossover. Secondly, any particularistic formation of identity finds itself confronted by the transcultural constitution of its own history. Within historical identities a certain identity must be selected, which is then declared to be *the* identity – alternatives however exist, and differing preferences of identity are sometimes at odds with one another within particularistic movements. Thirdly, it seems inconceivable that particularistic cultures might, in the long run, actually become homogeneous and remain protected against the rise of plurality within themselves. Not even totally closing the territorial and communicational borders could guarantee this, for even now there are already too many nuclei of plurality within each given culture. Fourthly, everyday life is characterized by transcultural elements everywhere, even where the most forceful identity rituals are found. – In general: Features of plurality and transculturality reach through to the core of particularistic identities. Therefore every particularism which simply tries to deny this plurality and transculturality and instead to establish forcefully monocultural purity – take fundamentalisms as example – is to be criticized argumentatively and pragmatically has poor chances of stability in the long run. Only those particularisms which acknowledge and permit plurality and transculturality can expect long term success.

[75] Cf. Robertson's term "glocalization" (R. Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, London: Sage, 1992). Cf. also Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture".

Of course, the local side can even today still be determined by ethnic belonging or the community in which one grew up. But it doesn't have to be. People can make their own choice with respect to their affiliations, and they should be allowed to do so.[76] Your actual homeland can be far away from your original homeland, which was perhaps just constriction, prison and anguish. *Ubi bene, ibi patria*, as was said in antiquity. Or, in a contemporary formulation, with Horkheimer and Adorno: "Homeland is the state of having escaped."[77] – I am not saying that it *has to be* this way, that one can *only* find a home far away from one's first home or original roots. But I am emphasizing that this is a *possible case worthy of recognition.* In a certain sense even one's first home is only really home as a second home. One must (in view of other possibilities) have consciously opted for it, subsequently have chosen or affirmed it for oneself. Only then is 'home' not an outshoot of nature, but a cultural and human category.

Unlike the globalization concept, then, the transculturality concept points out that in the midst of globalizing uniformization processes new cultural differences are forming *at the same time.* And, unlike the particularization concept, it shows that particularisms are co-determined through to the core by unifying factors. Its advantage lies, put briefly, in that it is not monocular, but binocular. It makes both current uniformization phenomena and processes of new formation of difference perceptible and understandable. It faces up to the *dual figure* of formation of unity *and* difference[78] and is hence able to do justice to both the globalizing and localizing aspects of the development. Both become comprehensible in terms of the logic of transcultural processes.

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With regard to the old concept of culture I have shown how badly it misrepresents descriptively today's conditions and which normative dangers its continuation or revival bring about for cultures' living together. I have contrasted this with the concept of transculturality which draws a different picture descriptively and normatively of the condition and relation of cultures: not one of isolation and conflict, but of entanglement, intermixing and

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[76] "Grant that we cannot stand outside of *any* culture. We need not therefore be standing inside of one and only one particular culture" (Gutmann, "The Challenge of Multiculturalism in Political Ethics", p. 192).

[77] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, transl. John Cumming, New York: Continuum, 1994, p. 78.

[78] On this current signature of phenomena of difference *and* entanglement generally see my *Vernunft*, l.c.

commonness. If the diagnosis given is to some extent correct, then the tasks of the future – in political and social, scientific and educational, artistic and creative respects – are best addressed through approaches which decidedly take transculturality into account.

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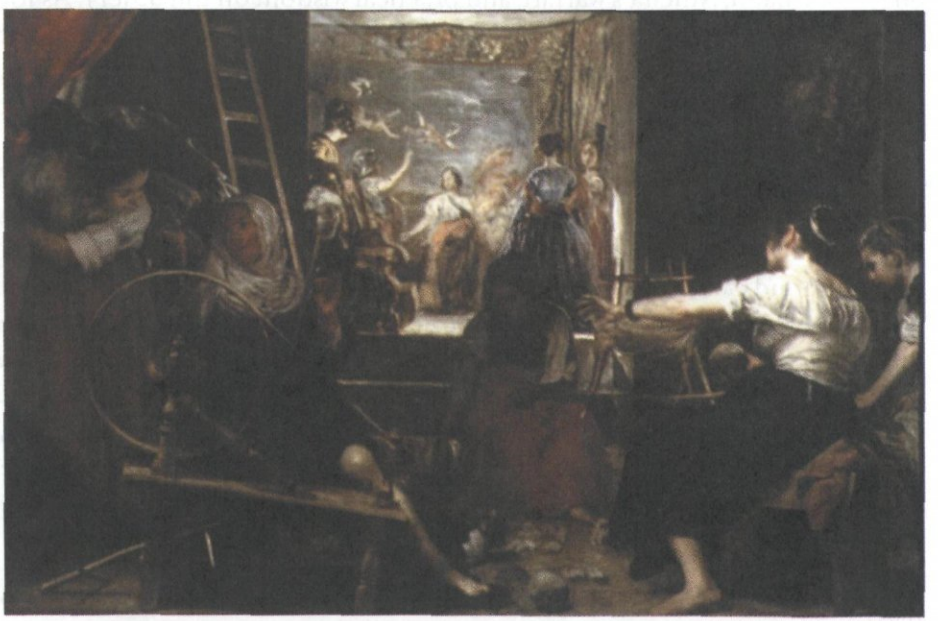
PHILOSOPHY OF CULTURE AND THEORY OF THE BAROQUE

ANTHONY J. CASCARDI

I begin with an image, exceptionally famous and, by overwhelming consensus, baroque: *Las Hilanderas* by Velásquez *(fig. 1)*. In the foreground is a homely workshop scene, with five women shown working around a spinning wheel, fashioning the threads that will go to make a decorative tapestry. In the background hangs the very kind of tapestry that is the result of this work: the stuff of nature, transformed into a thing of beauty by tools and human skill. But there is a curious doubling between the two scenes. The "background" tapestry illustrates a scene from the myth of Arachne, a mortal who became so skillful at weaving that she ventured to challenge the goddess Athena to a



1. Velásquez, "Las Hilanderas"

tapestry making contest. As Ovid tells the story, Arachne wove a picture of Europa, who was deceived by Jupiter when he disguised himself in the shape of a bull. And because Arachne's work was found to be so perfect, she was transformed by the jealous Athena into a spider: "her hair fell out, and with it both nose and ears; and the head shrank up; her whole body also grew small; the slender fingers clung to her side as legs; the rest was belly. Still from this she ever spins a thread; and now, as a spider, she exercises her time-old weaver-art" (*Metamorphoses*, VI, vv. 140-145).

As with a number of Velásquez' works, *The Spinners* can be taken as part an aesthetic reflection upon culture and the arts. On the one hand the painting identifies "culture" with the made artefact, the tapestry, which alludes to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as well as to Titian's painting of the *Rape of Europa*, which hung in the royal collection in Madrid. But on the other hand it identifies "culture" with the processes and tools by which those artefacts are fashioned. We can see the work as an analysis of art in terms of the productive processes and materials that form it; or, as I'll suggest over the course of what follows here, we can see it as engaged in a more critical questioning of the paradigm of production itself. After all, it turns out that although the tapestry scene in Velásquez is produced, it also pre-exists its artefactual production, as myth; this is, moreover, a myth that incorporates a reflection upon the relationship among the different kinds of art (Arachne's spinning and tapestry weaving on the one hand; Athena's warfare and practical wisdom on the other). As for Velásquez' painting, it seems also to reflect a conscious awareness of some of the differences between myth and art: whereas myth is given or handed down, art involves technique, which is to say, the knowledge of how to produce that which does not independently produce itself.[1]

The figure of weaving is an especially rich topos for an extension of aesthetics to cultural theory because culture has long been thought of in figurative terms as a woven fabric. The notion is as old as Plato and as modern as Deleuze and Guattari, who devote one section of *Mille Plateaux* to a discussion of textiles.[2] As for Plato, there is an important passage in the *Statesman* where the Young Socrates and the Eleatic Stranger discuss the art of weaving as a way of thinking about the relationship between two kinds of arts: those that go directly to form the products of "culture" (the so-called "productive" arts), and those "contributory" arts that in turn prepare the tools for the productive arts, "arts without whose previous assistance the specific task of the productive

[1] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Muses*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 25.

[2] Along with Plato, the *locus classicus* on weaving is Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, vv. 567-87.

arts could never be performed."[3] This distinction in turn leads Socrates to identify a still more fundamental division within each of these categories: the arts of combining and those of separating. Within the art of weaving, for instance, there is the activity of carding, which pulls the strands of raw material apart, and then there is the twisting and plaiting that forms the threads and entwines them in a pattern of warp and woof. As a philosophical dialogue, the *Statesman* is itself an example of the arts of separating and combining: through the method of diaresis, it works to separate the statesman from other functionaries, including soothsayers, clerks, politicians, orators, judges, and priests. But philosophical dialogue is also synthetic, and statesmanship requires the combination of the preparatory and productive arts.[4]

I want to reserve comment on the fact that Plato's thinking about culture in relation to weaving considers the making of a garment, while Ovid and Velásquez are interested in tapestries. Much modern thinking follows Plato to the extent that it regards culture not just as a kind of fabric, but as a text and, moreover, as one that can be understood in terms of the paradigm of production. Likewise, it distinguishes among different kinds of things produced. But it is not so clear that the modern division of things produced conforms to Plato's, and still less so that the modern statesman can be thought of as responsible for weaving together the various arts, or the different strands of human nature, into a harmonious whole. In a recent essay, for instance, the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben characterized modern thinking about production in terms of the difference between *poiēsis* and *praxis*. He suggested that the split between the two was solidified in relation to the development of machine technology during the industrial revolution: "With the development of modern technology, starting with the first industrial revolution in the second half of the eighteenth century, and with the establishment of an ever more widespread and alienating division of labor, the mode of presence of the things produced by man becomes double: on the one hand there are things that enter into presence according to the statute of aesthetics, that is, the works of art, and on the other hand there are those that come into being by (*technē*), that is, products in the stricter sense."[5] One

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[3] Plato, *Statesman*, 281e. The latter are the arts that "manufacture spindles, shuttles, and all the other instruments of clothes manufacture" (281e).

[4] In addition, Plato views statesmanship as requiring the ability to weave together the different strands of human nature into a harmonious social fabric. The statesman's job is to combine vigorous and aggressive traits, which provide the warp of society, with the quiet and moderation, which are its weft.

[5] Giorgio Agamben, *Man Without Content*, trans. Georgia Albert (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 60-61.

series of things produced would include tapestries, statues, works of music, paintings, pottery, and buildings, while the other would include things that we only sometimes think of as having been produced at all and that we seldom associate with art–things like judicial systems and codes, customs and manners, educational institutions, political structures, economic arrangements, strategies of war, scientific practices, and religious beliefs. It is of course true that Jacob Burckhardt suggested that the Renaissance state could be regarded as a work of art, and that Michel Foucault proposed that the self could itself be fashioned, and fashioned aesthetically. But both Burckhardt and Foucault regarded themselves as advancing alternatives to the prevailing ways in which cultural production was conceived.

What Agamben does not sufficiently stress is the relationship between these two series as it has been understood in post-romantic thought. By his account, "the particular status of the works of art [i.e. their status among the things that do not contain their own *telos*] has been identified with originality (or authenticity)." But this seems to credit the ideal of genius-like originality with quite a bit more than it is due. It would be more accurate and important to say that the division of production into *poiēsis* and *technē* has led to the assumption that the elements of first of these series (poems, paintings, sculptures) are dependent upon causal or explanatory factors that can be located in the second series (in economic arrangements, judicial systems, etc.). This is equally true whether it is said of individual works of art or of large-scale tendencies such as genres or period-related styles. Think of Lucien Goldmann's venerable *Sociology of the Novel*, which argues for a "rigorous homology" between the novel as a genre and the "daily life of an individualistic society born of market production,"[6] or of the writings of Spain's "Generation of '98" as rooted in a consciousness of crisis associated with the loss of Spain's American colonies. Borrowing a phrase from the political theorist Roberto Mangabeira Unger, I call such a model "deep structure" theory. Basic to it is the notion that effects at the level of a superstructure can be explained by their relation – implicitly or indirectly causal – to a base.[7] Some form of deep-structure analysis is at work in many contemporary theories of culture, even where they focus, as is increasingly the case, on issues of cultural contact and

[6] Lucien Goldmann, "Sociology of the Novel," *Telos*, no. 18 (Winter, 1973-74), p. 127. Cf. Fredric Jameson, *Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 44.

[7] In its roots, the model is Platonic. An archaic society described in the *Timaeus* reflects a strict division of labor, with the priestly class and its functions held separate from the artisans, and the artisans from the soldiers, while the shepherds, hunters, and farmers likewise perform their functions in isolation from one another. Plato's task in thinking about culture was to find their common measure and to rank them accordingly.

exchange, or on a reading of culture as a kind of text. Two principles, borrowed from Freud and Marx, inform this work. The first says that what happens in between the formative processes and their surface "effects" is determined by a series of sub-conscious or un-conscious mechanisms (ideology, repression, etc.). The second says that while the forces of power and desire driving production may be quite real, they are themselves either invisible, or visible only through their effects. In between cause and effect lie the mechanisms of distortion–the ideological distortions of power, desire's deflection of conscious aims, various other forms of *méconnaissance*. Thus it is not surprising to find that contemporary theories of cultural production so often lead to a hermeneutics of suspicion. Their goal is either to unmask the ideologies that act as screens for power and make its operation desirable, or to disclose the self-deceptive mechanisms of desire, the ones that make repression not just tolerable but also pleasurable. Fredric Jameson's well-known account of the "political unconscious" in his 1981 book of that title is meant to explain just these things.

But suppose we were to refuse the model of deep structure theory and the hermeneutics of suspicion to which it leads. Suppose we were to reject the view that art acts as a mask for power or desire. What might a theory of culture look like then, and what might its links to aesthetics be? While it is relatively well-established that the Platonic view of *poiēsis* leads us to think of art as a kind of shadow-play, it is seldom recognized that modern versions of deep structure theory can have equally undesirable effects, leading us to see art either as an ideological formation or as a kind of symptom-structure. When one reads in the Hungarian psychoanalyst Ferenczi that "all aesthetics has its root in repressed anal eroticism,"[8] or when the contemporary Marxist critic Terry Eagleton argues that the very notion of the "aesthetic artefact" is dependent upon the ideological forms of modern class society, the reductivist tendencies of deep-structure thinking become breathtakingly clear.[9]

There is no denying that deep-structure theory meets certain needs. The paradigm of production in particular can be useful in stabilizing a distinction between "things made" and "things found" or "given." But there may be other ways to deal with that distinction, and it may in the end need overturning, particularly after Duchamp, who staged a kind of aesthetic *coup d'état* when he showed that the "thing made" could be treated as if it were a "thing found," and that art could be found already made. I think a more important concern

[8] Sandor Ferenczi, "On the Ontogenesis of the Interest in Money," in *Sex in Psychoanalysis*, trans. E. Jones (New York: R Brunner, 1950), p. 325.

[9] Terry Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 3.

is that deep-structure theory tends to substitute an account of formative processes for an aesthetic interpretation of culture, presenting us with an explanation of the way in which things are made as an account of what kind of sense they make, and how. (The relevant distinction can be exemplified again by reference to *Las Hilanderas*, albeit though through a schematism that the painting eventually undoes: the foreground shows a scene of production, while the background points through style and allusion to Ovid and Titian.) Moreover, as soon as one recognizes that the modes and mechanisms of production we think of as acting upon the cultural superstructure stand in need of interpretation just as much as culture's material artefacts need to be explained, then we can see that something beyond deep-structure theory is required of any theory of culture that would take the claims of art seriously into account. For this purpose, we might begin by regarding the whole gamut of productive processes and mediating forces, including "power," "interest," "desire," and the like, as no more "fundamental" than the forms they go to shape and as standing equally in need of interpretation. The expectation of a theory of culture that would take its model from aesthetics is not just an account of productive processes, mechanisms, and tools, or a semiosis of forms, but an account of how materials are organized so as to make a world of sense. Such a theory's ideal would be a full account of the role of sensation in the making of sense. Contemporary theories that regard culture as a kind of text have relatively little to say about culture in its material sense; moreover, they give no account of what Hegel saw as a crucial task of aesthetic theory: an explanation of meaning as *embodied*. What we need for this is neither a deep-structure view of the processes of production, nor a hermeneutics of suspicion, but something closer to an aesthetic account of the relationship between the two senses of "sense."

It is here that a turn to the example of the baroque can prove especially valuable, for as the example of *Las Hilanderas* may suggest, the arts of the baroque were themselves engaged in a critical reflection about deep-structure models of culture. To this they add an acute awareness of the interplay between material texture and textual sense. But there are special challenges that one encounters when dealing with the baroque that raise the stakes in this endeavor several-fold. One of them is implicit in the very question "What is (the) baroque?" At once the description of a set of stylistic markers that can be recognized independent of history and the designation of a particular period in history, there has always been something elusive about the very notion of the "baroque." The term has all the pretense of a category-concept but none of the orderliness we would expect such a category to contain. By what

particular logic could one link Baltasar Gracián's theory of wit (*ingenio*) with Bernini's sinewy columns in the Vatican, or the oratory façade of St. Philip Neri in Rome with the poetry of Milton? The play of reflected light and space in *Las Meninas* is said to be baroque, but so too are the emblem books and, on some accounts, the *Aritmologia* of the Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher, the second volume of *Don Quixote,* and the German *Trauerspiel.* To invoke Wittgenstein's phrase, there is no obvious "family resemblance" among these things – either that, or the term "baroque" names so many different families that the resemblances among them are anything but clear.

The temptation to turn to history for an explanation of the baroque is thus quite powerful. The hope is that an account of historical factors can demonstrate a coherence at the deep-structure level that a description of the phenomena or a review of examples can't achieve. And yet the chronological markers that one might invoke in order to explain the baroque are anything but stable. This becomes embarrassingly apparent as soon as one confronts such anomalies as the "Hellenistic Baroque," the "Romanesque Baroque," or the "Late Gothic Baroque,"[10] i.e., cultural and aesthetic constellations that can't reasonably be explained by the same historical principles that are operative in *the* baroque (perhaps one should say the "historical" baroque or the "baroque" baroque). Just limiting oneself to the post-Renaissance (1500) world, one hardly knows whether to identify the baroque with the late 16th and 17th centuries (as might be the case for poetry and the visual arts), or with the late 17th and early 18th centuries (as might be the case for music). Historians of architecture and the visual arts impose a set of still finer distinctions among "mannerism," "baroque," and "rococo," as well as between their "northern" and "southern" variations. These distinctions have on occasion been adapted by literary historians. But even this does not always help. The period of the baroque in Spain corresponds to what is most often called "classicism" or "neo-classicism" in France.[11] Indeed, Foucault's *Les mots et les choses* moves from the end of the Renaissance in Cervantes to the "classical age" in Descartes without so much as a hiccough and with nary a nod in the direction of anything particularly baroque. Such is the view from La Tour Eiffel. For some, the answer is simply to dislodge the "baroque" from history altogether, granting it the right to migrate across the centuries and to traverse the seas. For the

[10] Ervin Panofsky, "What Is Baroque?" in *Three Essays on Style* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), p. 20.

[11] The issue has been discussed by, among others, Louis Marin in his essay on Versailles, "Classical, Baroque: Versailles, or the Architecture of the Prince," in *Yale French Studies,* 80: *Baroque Topographies: Literature/ History/ Philosophy,*" ed. Timothy Hampton (1991), 167-182.

Catalan critic Eugenio D'Ors, anything that is marked by exuberance or excess, including much of what we would call Romanticism, may count as an example of the baroque.[12] D'Ors' "baroque" is a constant of human nature that seems to manifest itself at periodic intervals in history. The novelist Alejo Carpentier could link the baroque to the conditions of *mestisaje* characteristic of Latin America, whose exotic literature, flora, and fauna, he saw as "naturally baroque." Never mind the cultivated gardens of Schönbrunn, Aranjuez, or Versailles: the Latin American baroque counts the ancient cosmogonies of *Chilám Balám* and the *Popol Vuh*.[13]

Some 25 years ago, in a book called *La Cultura del barroco* (*The Culture of the Baroque*), the Spanish social historian José Antonio Maravall attempted to put an end to some of this confusion by declaring "baroque" to be a circumscribed historical phenomenon with strict chronological limits.[14] His goal was to be both historical and deep-structural. Anything in Europe between 1600 and 1675 (but especially between 1605 and 1650, and especially in Spain) was decreed to be "baroque" and any theory of the baroque would have to explain it, granting of course sufficient latitude to take certain national and regional differences into account. Moreover–and this was the audacious part — Maravall de-coupled the notion of the "baroque" from any essential relation to art. The formalism that allowed art historians like Wölfflin and Panofsky to make some sense of the baroque by reference to a grammar of style was banished with a single stroke.[15] On Maravall's account, the culture of the baroque emerged when and as it did as the consequence of a crisis in the economic order of society. More specifically, Maravall argued that the development of pre-capitalist economic formations produced in response a culture that (1) was controlled by hegemonic institutions, particularly those of political absolutism; (2) was a culture of the masses; (3) was predominantly urban; and (4) was conservative in its political outlook. Maravall was by no

[12] Eugenio D'Ors, *Lo Barroco* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1993).

[13] Alejo Carpentier, "Lo Barroco y lo real maravilloso" (1975), in *Obras completas*, 13: *Ensayos* (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1990), pp. 167ff.

[14] Compare the pragmatist view that would regard the baroque as a kind of "lump," and in response to which we would identity "the place of the lump, or of that *sort* of lump, in somebody's view of something other than the science to which the lump has been assigned (for example, the role of gold in the international economy, in 16th century alchemy, in Alberich's fantasy life, in my fantasy life, and so forth, as opposed to its role in chemistry)." Richard Rorty, "Texts and Lumps" in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers*, vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 86.

[15] For Maravall, art was merely the way in which a change in epoch related to a consciousness of crisis was noted by Burckhardt and Gurlitt. See José Antonio Maravall, *La Cultura del barroco* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1975), pp. 29-30.

means the first to attempt a sociological understanding of the baroque. Critics before him, notably Werner Weisbach, had suggested important links between the baroque and Counter-Reformation religious practices, and Arnold Hauser's *Social History of Art* took considerable pains to understand the baroque in the context of broad-scale changes in the social landscape of early modern Europe. But Maravall was among the first, perhaps *the* first, to neutralize the differences among various domains of culture (religion, politics, philosophy, literature, the visual arts, etc.) in an effort to see them as an inter-linked whole springing from a common source:

> it's not that baroque painting, the baroque economy, the baroque art of war, [and so on] don't resemble one another.... but rather, given the fact that they develop in the same circumstances, under the same conditions, answering the same vital needs, responding to the modifying influence of all the other factors, each one of them finds itself thus transformed, and comes to depend on the epoch as a whole.... These are the terms in which one can ascribe the definitive character of a period–in this case its character as baroque–to theology, painting, the art of war, physics, to an economy in crisis, monetary upheaval, the uncertainty of credit, and economic wars, along with which came the growing control of agricultural property by the nobility and an increase in poverty among the masses; these factors created a feeling of uncertainty and instability in personal and social life, which was dominated by repressive forces that in turn shaped baroque man and that allow us to call him by this name (*Culture of the Baroque*, pp. 28-29).

The observations about "baroque man" notwithstanding, Maravall's remains an impressive account for the sheer breadth of territory it attempts to cover. And yet it raises questions that very nearly undermine the claims it wants to make, to wit: what, if anything, is "baroque" about this particular constellation of cultural forms? What is "baroque" about the politics of absolutism, Loyolan spirituality, or etiquette at the court of Philip II?[16] If questions of style are not themselves at issue, then why characterize this urban culture of masses and its underlying crisis in aesthetic terms at all? One could well answer that the dominant cultural institutions of this period all relied upon the arts to establish and project their power, that baroque theatre was one of the means by which an absolutist court was able to secure and extend its reach, and that baroque painting was a way in which Counter-Reformation beliefs were disseminated. Maravall himself admits that it was in the realm of

[16] I discuss this particular question in *Ideologies of History in the Spanish Golden Age* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1997).

the arts that the historical transformations of the baroque were first noted. But we can expect more of a theory of culture than this one-fold set of inversions will allow. For if the challenge is to present an account of culture as including both the series of "things produced" as well as the materials and tools that contribute to their production, then the goal should be not just to discover the way in which, e.g., baroque theatre was driven by political absolutism or the way in which baroque painting helped inculcate Counter-Reformation beliefs, but also to see the ways in which Counter-Reformation spirituality was pictorial and political absolutism theatrical. Examples of this sort could well be multiplied, but the limit-cases are probably the notions of a "baroque economy," or of "baroque society," which we (or Maravall) want to treat both as effects (i.e. as among the phenomena to be explained) and as causes (i.e. as offering us explanations for other effects).

Rather than invoke theories of cultural production or textuality in order to interpret the culture of the baroque, my suggestion is the reverse: to take the baroque as a model for the kind of analysis that a philosophy of culture ought to provide. The reasons for foregrounding the arts in this particular enterprise are compelling. Above all, they help model culture as a self-positing set of practices that are related to one another in ways that deep-structure theory may be unable to recognize. The model is not one of surface and depth but one of effects that are answered by other effects, none of which can be traced back to a determinate cause.[17] The question "What were the underlying factors that can explain the baroque?" as a phenomenon within the history of culture can be answered best if we recognize that this is a moment when art strove to establish itself as reaching just as "deep" as anything that we might wish to identify as its cause–and, I would add, as existing just as much on the surface. The point of baroque illusionism is that the model of surface and depth turns out to be of limited use unless we can somehow account for the energy of the surface and for the density of forms involved in the making of sense. This is one reason why I think it would also be right to see the arts of the baroque as undermining the difference between "ornament" and "essential line" rather than as establishing a view of art as ornamental. Think of the pillars of Bernini's baldachino in St. Peter's in Rome as an example *(fig. 2)*. In comparison to columns that merely are decorated or embellished by an accretion of detail on the surface, Bernini's pillars mark a moment when ornament turns the difference between "inside" and "outside" on its head, for the structure and function of the inside are themselves enfolded in the surface.

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[17] Cf. the stoics, who relate causes to causes; and cf. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

2. Bernini, St. Peter's, Rome, baldachino

More often than not, complaints about the "decadence" or "bad taste" of the baroque mask ethically-charged concerns about the loss of a necessary connection between an interior "essence" and its exterior face. But the matter of that connection is something that baroque art itself worried about to a notable degree. It has often been said that in baroque architecture the façade is freed from any essential connection to interior volume. The result is not so much an ornamented exterior, or even the layering of one surface on top of another, but the creation of an autonomous interior space, which is to say, of an interiority that is not obliged to

3. Emmanuel de Witte, "Interor with a Woman at a Clavicord"

face the external world[18] *(fig. 3)*. This is the problem of the "empty inside." Dutch painting specializes in the cultivation of just this sort of autonomous inside, where the expansion of the interior proceeds by virtue of seemingly limitless re-framings; within there stands (or sits) a virtually windowless self, inscrutable and monad-like. The Leibnitzian-monadistic critique of mechanistic explanations of perception and thought gives us a grand tour of the empty inside: "Perception, and that which depends upon it, are inexplicable by mechanical causes," writes Leibnitz in the *Monadology*; "suppose that there were a machine so constructed as to produce thought, feeling, and perception, we could imagine it increased in size while retaining the same proportions, so that one could enter it as one might a mill. On going inside we should see only the parts impinging upon one another; we should not see anything that would explain perception."[19]

The problem of the empty inside in turn leaves us with a structure and a skin. I think of the way Caravaggio depicts peeling *(fig. 4)*, but even more so

4. Caravaggio, "Boy Peeling a Fruit"

[18] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibnitz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 29.

[19] Leibnitz, *Monadology*, sec. 17, in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. G. H. R. Parkinson, trans. Mary Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson (London: J. M. Dent, 1997), p. 181.

of the special interest that Ribera takes in martyrdom by flaying, or by emaciation, as in his paintings of St. Bartholomew and St. Andrew. Such images register the attempt to redeem the emptiness of the inside by exerting a moral force at the very surface of things. But how surprisingly difficult it can be to tell aestheticism and asceticism apart! One is just as likely to find ascetic practices as a kind of aestheticism that counts on the most candid display of flesh, as in some of Caravaggio's works (e.g. *Cupid, Bacchus*). But think also of the great popularity of fireworks in the baroque,[20] which have been characterized by none other than Adorno as a pure aesthetic "effect," as "apparition par excellence ... [as] empirical appearance free of the burden of empirical being."[21]

While there may always be a risk of aestheticism associated with the baroque, always a question of why press the materials to yield this much and not more, why add this much ornament and not more, or less, why include just this many members in a series–and never an entirely satisfying answer, I also think that the art of the baroque works especially hard to bring such aesthetic questions to the level of critical self-consciousness. (It is also the question of why just this much *asceticism* and not more.) This critical questioning sets it apart from other forms of illusionistic play or from other instances of aesthetic exuberance, embellishment, or ornamental excess. And so if the baroque can be associated with certain emphases of style, it is also the moment when style is raised to such a level of self-consciousness that it comes to serve as an organizing principle for culture itself.

Take Annibale Carracci's *Dead Christ* as a case in point *(fig. 5)*. The painting is as much "about" the ability of style to create the forced perspective from which the suffering Christ is viewed as it is about the redemptive powers of that suffering. An intensity of pain is transferred, through the power of style, into an intensity of point of view; the universal meaning of the Crucifixion is subsumed under a radical foreshortening that everywhere bespeaks the ability of art to compete with the power of belief. The result is not so much the expression of a universal religious truth from a subjective point of view as

[20] See for example Kazimierz Siemienowicz, *Grand art d'artillerie,* (1651). For historical accounts see Eberhard Fahler, *Feuerwerke des Barock* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974); Alan St. Hill Brock, *A History of Fireworks* (London: Harrap, 1949); Henry Burnell Faber, *Military Pyrotechnics* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919); and George Plimpton, *Fireworks* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984).

[21] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 120. This description is surprisingly close to Enrique Lafuente Ferrari's characterization of "Las Hilanderas" as "pure appearance, pure visuality," as "reality subjectivated to the extreme limit, to the point where it seems about to vanish." Lafuente-Ferrari, *Velásquez* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), p. 94.

5. Caracci, "Dead Christ"

the creation of an organized surface wherein perspective is a prior condition for the appearance of any truth. Perspective implies the necessity of seeing things from a finite place, but here "place" implies both the definiteness of physical location and something like the focus of conscious attention. Panofsky gets close to this idea when he argues that spatial tensions in baroque art produce a "subjective intensification,"[22] but I think he misses the point that such intensification registers the fact that subjectivity is a condition for viewing surfaces that in turn creates an intensity in the surfaces.

As for the wider range and ramifications of such efforts, architecture and painting place the powers of line, plane, and sphere in the service of a broad-gauge reappraisal of the hierarchies between the "upper" and "lower" worlds, both of which are seen as indispensable facets of "culture" in spite of the fact that they may be incompatible. The results are visible in the complexity of surfaces characteristic of the baroque. In Velásquez's *Kitchen Scene* showing Christ in the house of Mary and Martha framed through a window in the background, for instance, the eye is forced to shift constantly between two

[22] See Panofsky, *Three Essays on Style*, p. 51.

scenes; these echo one another but never quite connect. They are discontinuous, or merely adjacent, and yet we are unable to say exactly how or why. Is the background scene a painted image meant to be read as temporally disjunct from what we see in the foreground? Or are we meant to be looking through a window onto a biblical scene, in which case the two moments coexist in time but are spatially disjunct?[23] The work says something about the relationship between different forms of life: Mary or Martha? The *vita activa* or the *vita contemplativa*? Those questions are articulated in the context of a critique of the relations between sacred and secular worlds that no longer counts on a cosmos divided into evaluatively distinct upper and lower realms. Such divisions, inherited from Plato and from Christian neo-platonism, may persist in the baroque. The neo-Platonic tradition in particular imagined many floors, or levels, of Being, which were linked from beginning to end in a "Great Chain" of essences. But the arts of the baroque took it upon themselves to question the underlying structure and order of those links,[24] and posed the question of whether they could be re-established on some other grounds.[25] One of the most often overlooked sites for the work involved in such questioning is the stair. If a staircase connect levels – architectural, spiritual, or otherwise – then what connects the steps within the stairs? One worry is that such "connections" may depend upon a logic of adjacency and nothing more, and it remains far from clear just how strong a bond adjacency can provide.

If one of the concerns of the baroque was to build a rich and meaningful surface from the juxtaposition of material forms, then we might well want to know how the elements comprising the surface are bound. What degree of disruption can they sustain? Take Hans Holbein's most famous painting, "The Ambassadors," as a case in point. The painting shows the world of "culture"

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[23] "Whether this is meant to be an actual scene glimpsed on the wall is not clear. The ambiguity is intentional on Velásquez's part," Lafuente-Ferrari, *Velásquez*, p. 35. Leibnitz might describe them as "incompossible," i.e. they belong to two equally possible but incommensurable worlds (see also Deleuze, *The Fold*, p. 60).

[24] Or to break their connections to magic bonds. Cf. for example Giordano Bruno, "General Account of Bonding."

[25] It is Kant's explicit project in the *Critique of Judgment* to repair the breach between his own version of these "two worlds"; this is the role of aesthetic reflection: "The realm of the concept of nature under the one legislation, and that of the concept of freedom under the other, are completely cut off from all reciprocal influence ... by the broad gulf that divides the supersensible from phenomena.... This faculty [judgment] ... provides us with the mediating concept between concepts of nature and concepts of freedom – a concept that makes possible the transition from the pure theoretical [legislation of understanding] to the pure practical [legislation of reason]." *Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 37-38.

rendered with meticulous care. The two statesmen in the picture – Jean de Dinteville, French ambassador to the English court, and George de Selve, soon to be named Bishop of Lavaur – have succeeded in combining many different arts, if not in a weave of warp and woof, as in Plato, then by a logic of adjacency that helps to create the semblance of a meaningful world. In the objects of the painting we recognize music and poetry, but also science, and so mathematics, navigation, and astronomy. And yet there is a tension in the painting between the arrangement of identifiable things – their more or less coherent formation as a legible "scene" of diplomatic statecraft – and the anamorphic skull, which cannot be woven into this scene and is not "adjacent" to anything else within the image-space. It has come as if from some other place. Seen from the perspective of the artefacts of "culture," the skull remains a blur; to attempt to bring it into the world of diplomatic culture requires the efforts of twisting, flattening, and compression. But by the same token, if you attempt to read the world of culture from the perspective of the skull then culture becomes an indecipherable blur. The statesman-like ideal of diplomacy as a peaceful linkage among territories around the globe is inconsistent with the force of a perspective whose dis-location is irreconcilable with the cultural order that statesmanship and the arts provide.[26]

One response to this unnerving challenge to culture is to re-order the world around the skull, to meet the force of its distortion with that of an equally intense aesthetic concentration. Such is the ambition of certain types of "devotional" painting. Their hope is to transpose an unidentifiable force into an intensely organized play of light and dark. But another response is simply to accept the fact that there are limits to the level of organization that we might ever expect to find within the cultural field. In Walter Benjamin's study of German baroque drama, for instance, the *Trauerspiel* depends upon a semiotics of "allegory" in which "any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else."[27] The implication is that "culture" amounts to a constellation of things that are neither similar nor dissimilar in nature, much less vitally or logically linked, and only tenuously adjacent. In Benjamin's view, the space "in between" things is filled with neither desire nor power nor force but with a melancholia that records their absence. ("The only pleasure the melancholic permits himself ... is allegory," p. 185). In an image sometimes

[26] Moreover, the skull is not just death but a distortion of death, a *memento mori* that, unlike the tapestry in Velásquez' work, is so displaced from the context of its original sense as to be nearly unrecognizable – assuming that it can be associated with something like a context of origination at all.

[27] Walter Benjamin, *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977), p. 175.

attributed to Caravaggio, dead birds are related to one another by a logic of parataxis and not much more *(fig. 6)*. And, whether it is a matter of globes and telescopes, teacups and combs, or a string of dead birds, it may be the case that mere adjacency in time and place will never yield more than an association of "this" and "that," or of "this" and "this."[28] The effect is to equate the work of art with its minimal requirement, composition; just putting things together becomes a goal in itself.

If there is nothing at the deep-structure level that holds the series of "made things" together from beginning to end, it will be little surprise to find that the arts of the baroque flaunt discontinuity and disarray as a condition of culture itself.[29] "Culture" is imagined as a kind of collection, usually of disparate things, and sometimes with maximum disregard for the organizing force of their original social or geographical contexts. Hence the interest in "composite" architectural scenes featuring buildings – usually in the form of ruins – whose relationship to one another may be independent of their location in time and/or place. Hence also the great interest in the adjacency of the different arts and in the production of "synaesthetic" forms. Already in *Las*

6. "Still Life with Birds" (Caravaggio?)

[28] If this is the case, then what is taken apart can also be put back together in new and different combinations. Hence the function of wit as a form of invention that works by yoking two otherwise unrelated things together. The greater the distance between the terms involved, the more powerful the example of wit.

[29] Cf. Benjamin on "'The Confused Court'" as a model for allegory, "subject to the law of 'dispersal' and collectedness,'" *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 188.

Hilanderas painting "incorporates" tapestry making, and tapestry in turn incorporates other painting and myth. But baroque architecture incorporates sculpture, and baroque painting incorporates architecture, while painted buildings can likewise incorporate paintings of painting. Karsten Harries observed that the pictorialization of architectural ornament was central to Bavarian Church design in the 17th and 18th centuries, and that such ornaments eventually grew into the pictorialization of architecture itself: ceilings that begin as support and shelter against the sky eventually became representations of the heavens.[30] As each of the arts extends its reach, the result is a "composite" realm, which is to say an aesthetic domain whose organization expands upon the same principle that appears to be at work within each of the individual arts. Composition, the technique of putting things together in a place, yields a fusion of media and forms; the series becomes the pile or the heap. Bernini, the architect of St. Peter's in Rome, is credited with having been the first to idealize such a goal as "beautiful"; most interesting of all, perhaps, the Berninian ideal of the *bel composto* was conceived as independent of anything inherent in the relations among materials, techniques, design, color, form, etc.[31]

Ideals of "com-position" and effects of synaesthetic "fusion" can be useful in modeling culture's quality as an aggregate, lump-like thing with quite a bit less consistency than deep-structure theories tend to expect. The question is whether these notions can provide some of the most basic things we would expect of a philosophy of culture, such as a description of how the arts and practices stand together or in relation to place. If the baroque is an urban phenomenon then what does this mean for culture's relationship to cultivation? If it is cosmopolitan and transhistorical then what role does it play in the process of defining, dividing, and relating different territorial regions or historical or political sites? While these questions may be too large to answer here, I would nonetheless recall that Plato's image of weaving in the *Statesman* occurs in relation to the fashioning of a garment meant to protect the body from the weather, while Ovid and Velásquez are interested in the weaving of tapestries. Deleuze and Guattari in turn characterize these two–

[30] Karsten Harries, *The Bavarian Rococo Church: Between Faith and Asceticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 21.

[31] See Irving Lavin, *Bernini and the Unity of the Visual Arts*, II (New York: Oxford University Press for the Pierpont Morgan Library, 1975), p. 143. Filippo Baldinucci and Domenico Bernini (the artist's son) wrote: "It is the general opinion that Bernini was the first to attempt to unify architecture with sculpture and painting in such a way as to make of them all a beautiful whole [*un bel composto*], and that he achieved this by occasionally departing from the rules, without actually violating them" (cited in Lavin, p. 6).

clothes-fabric and tapestry-fabric–as the paradigmatic types of textiles, at least among cultures that define themselves in relation to a fixed location (i.e. sedentary cultures). This is because clothing and tapestries "annex the body and exterior space, respectively, to the immobile house: fabric [in these two forms] integrates the body and the outside into a closed space."[32] The house in turn transforms a number of biological functions, such as procreation and eating; already for Vitruvius it was the basis of the public sphere. But lest these notions of territory and house leave us with an understanding of "culture" in functional terms, it may be useful to bear in mind that, at least as Deleuze sees it, already, prior to the house, "the territory implies the emergence of pure sensory qualities, of sensibilia that cease to be merely functional and become expressive features, enabling the transformation of purely pragmatic purposes into what we would be satisfied to call culture or art."[33] Within the baroque Leibnitz recognized the limitations involved in thinking about place in terms of structure or function, much less as the cause of whatever happens in it. Place for Leibnitz was also quality, and, finally, an expression of the reversibility of active and passive modes of being in the world. To quote just briefly from the essay on the principle of indiscrenibles, "that which has a place must express place in itself; so that distance and the degree of distance involves also a degree of expressing in the thing itself a remote thing, either of affecting it or of receiving an affection from it.... in fact, situation really involves a degree of expressions" ("On the Principle of Indiscernibles," in *Philosophical Writings*, p. 133).

Following Leibnitz, Gilles Deleuze proposed a theory of the baroque that abandons the model of deep structure in favor of the notion of an expressive "operation" directed to an account of surfaces. The specific nature of the baroque operation is folding: "[The baroque] endlessly produces folds. The baroque trait twists and turns its folds, pushing them to infinity, fold over fold, one upon the other."[34] The fold serves as both figure and concept, and it has a value that is at once descriptive and analytical. The interest in works like Caravaggio's *Narcissus* or El Greco's *Burial of the Count of Orgaz* is to show that all that is needed in order to begin the operation of folding is a single division or echo in space; everything else follows from it. Indeed, the problem

[32] Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 476.

[33] Gilles Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 183.

[34] Deleuze, *The Fold*, p. 3.

is not so much how to initiate the process of folding but how, once begun, to get the folding to stop[35] *(fig. 7)*.

The Leibnitz-Deleuze notion of the fold replaces that of the Platonic weave. Moreover, it concentrates in ways that deep structure theory does not on the texture of the material in question. Remember that while the Leibnitzian monad is a "simple substance" there is within it a mani-foldedness that allows it to take on distinctive attributes and to change: "There must be differentiation within that which changes ... [this] must involve a plurality within the unity of the simple ... And consequently the simple must contain a large number of affections and relations, although it has no parts" (*Monadology*, secs. 12, 13, in *Philosophical Writings*, p. 180). One of the great attractions of this notion for an aesthetic theory of culture is that it allows us to account for

7. Pilgrimage Church, Wies (Bavaria), statue

[35] On this point, Deleuze thinks exactly the reverse: "The problem is not how to finish a fold, but how to continue it, to have it go through the ceiling, how to bring it to infinity" (*The Fold*, p. 34).

the qualities of things and not merely for their essence, or rather to see quality as itself essential. At the limit of the calculus of the series lies the science of characteristics, or at least this is the great Leibnitzian hope.[36] Qualities are determined less by the nature of their component parts or by their underlying causes than by the *manner* in which simple substances are folded (hence the connection between the style known as "mannerism" and the baroque): "That is what Leibnitz stated when he invoked the 'paper or the tunic.' Everything is folded in its own manner, cord and rod, but also colors distributed according to the concavity and convexity of the luminous rays... Texture does not depend on the parts themselves but on strata that determine its 'cohesion'" (Deleuze, *The Fold*, pp. 36-37).

The operation of folding envelops "deep structure" causes, mechanisms, and motives in the surface, at least until such time as they may become submerged or shadowed by some other fold. Among the principles that enable this thinking is the Leibnitzian notion that "the predicate lies in the subject" (Leibnitz, *Philosophical Writings*, p. 135). This aesthetic concept of agency can provide a useful modification of deep structure models of production and can likewise help guard against the reductivism that takes culture as grid-like surface to be deciphered. Deleuze may be right to say that the abandonment of the ideal of art as a "window on the world" eventually yielded to that of the surface as a plane on which "lines, numbers, and changing characters are inscribed" (*The Fold*, pp. 3, 27). Deleuze has the work of Robert Rauschenberg in mind, but I believe it would be fairer to think of the informational grid, or even the combinatorial matrix, which results from a flattening of the fold and the elimination of the texture of the weave.

By contrast, the baroque arts suggest a view of culture as a textured surface that is neither the (ideological) effect of a deep structure cause nor a grid of information. Whatever lies down "deep" must somehow be understood to act not just through its power to organize and produce surfaces, but by means of its own envelopment in them.[37] The result is a view of culture as a realm of effects for which there is no determinate, underlying, deep structure cause, but as a domain in which motives and cause are themselves transposed

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[36] "The art of combinations in particular is, in my opinion, the science which treats of the forms of things or of formulae in general (it could also be called generally the science of *quality* in general, or, of forms). That is, it is the science of *quality* in general, or, of the like and the unlike, according as various formulae arise from the combination of *a, b, c,* etc., whether they represent quantities or something else. It is distinguished from algebra, which is concerned with formulae applied to *quantity*, i.e. with the equal and the unequal." *Of Universal Synthesis and Analysis*, in *Philosophical Writings*, p. 17.

[37] See Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p. 124.

to the surface and energize it. There is a grammar and a mode of agency that can be associated with these effects, but it is not one that we are accustomed to recognize from the models of causality that work in the physical world. Consider the example of façades that curve (St. Philip Neri Oratory, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane), of columns that twist (Bernini), or of trees that bend in response to no identifiable force in nature (*fig. 8*). Insofar as these torsions are effects standing in need of causal explanation at all, we might do best to describe them as self-caused. They are phenomena of the sort that we might associate with a psychology of subjective consciousness, were it possible to ascribe subjectivity to such things. Building on Leibnitz' notion of the "predicate in the subject," one can locate the rough equivalent of this logic within the field of "characterology," which takes a special interest in passions that overwhelm whatever causal account of them we might be able to provide. (Rosalind Krauss's observations on Rodin's *Adam* move in a similar direction: "What outward cause produces this torment of bearing in the *Adam*? What internal armature can one imagine, as one looks on from the outside, to explain the possibilities of their distention? Again one feels backed against a wall of unintelligibility. For it is not as though there is a *different* viewpoint one could seek from which to find those answers. Except one; and that is not

8. Hobbema, "Middleharnis Avenue"

9. Villabrille, "Head of St. Paul"

exactly a *place* from which to look at the work – any of Rodin's work – but, rather, a condition. This condition might be called a belief in the manifest intelligibility of *surfaces*, and that entails relinquishing certain notions of cause as it relates to meaning, or accepting the possibility of meaning without the proof or verification of cause. It would mean accepting effects themselves as self-explanatory – as significant even in the absence of what one might think of as the logical background from which they emerge."[38]) In such cases the result is a surface that can't be characterized as either active or passive, shallow or deep. It is at once a "pure effect" and the result of indeterminate causes. Even where the aesthetic surface is organized as a grid, there is what Deleuze describes as a "surface tension" at work in it,[39] which is to say that one must reckon with effects that follow from its organization *as* a surface that appeals to sense. The culture of the baroque excels in the cultivation of just this kind of surface tension, producing energies that can't be reduced to any underlying cause. And so it is with "culture" itself, which is neither a formative process

[38] Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (New York: Viking, 1977), p. 26
[39] Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, pp. 124-125.

nor a collection of things produced, and as much like a lump as a text *(fig. 9)*. But lest the image of the lump make culture sound too inert, I should add that it is a lump whose self-positing and expressive qualities are everywhere foregrounded in the baroque. The energy that gathers in its surfaces provides an aesthetically rich model for thinking about culture as such.

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WALTER BENJAMIN AND THE URBAN LABYRINTH

HEINZ PAETZOLD

The main purpose of my essay is to discuss the relevance and fruitfulness of the description of cityscape as labyrinth. Within his city-centred cultural theory, Walter Benjamin, gave a new understanding to this powerful image which emerged in ancient Minoan culture and ancient Greek mythology, and which found a widespread return during the seventeenth century. Today, many theoreticians, writers, artists, designers, composers and architects are still inspired by the concept of the labyrinth. I cannot give a full account of this multi-faceted, puzzling history; Gustav René Hocke (1963), Karl Kerenyi (1950) and Helmut Kern (1999), among others, were better prepared for doing so than I. However, from the concept of the labyrinth, Benjamin made one of the clues for understanding genuinely modern urban experiences: to experience urban 'landscape' as labyrinth. What were his motives? I will be arguing that, within Benjamin's cultural theory, the concept of the labyrinth is closely related to a truely urban cultural figure who emerged in 19th century: the flâneur.

Although a major part of my essay focuses on Benjamin, I am speaking for our times as well. Can we give a new meaning to the two afore-mentioned crucial notions in Benjamin's thought, or do they remain within the historical text? But let me begin by reminding the reader of some central features of philosophical reflections on landscape, before shifting from landscape to cityscape.

I

I take as my starting point the assumption that both landscape and cityscape have to be conceptualized not as pure givens, in the sense of natural phenomena, but rather as cultural phenomena. There is always an embodied subjectivity involved as their condition of possibility. Theorizers of landscape,

ranging from Francesco Petrarch to Alexander von Humboldt, Carl Gustav Carus and Georg Simmel, share the conviction that landscape is an eminently modern phenomenon which presupposes an individualized and fragmented subjectivity. Landscape exists only to the extent that there is a subjectivity experiencing and constituting it. A natural environment becomes a landscape only in so far as it is viewed and looked at. It is not produced by the spatially and temporally unmoving subjectivity, but by the moving body. Landscape is constituted by a culturally shaped subjectivity.

One consequence of this is that making a landscape out of a natural environment is underpinned by culturally produced imagery – by paintings, for instance. We may experience the countryside from the perspective of a Camille Corot, a Caspar David Friedrich, a William Turner, a Jan van Goyen or a Vermeer van Delft. The act of constituting landscape consists in continuous shifts of horizons and perspectives due to the changing positions of the moving body. The resulting perspective view is intrinsically linked to those views which follow. Edmund Husserl used to talk of 'retentions' and 'protentions'.

For purposes of my following discourse, I would like to distinguish between two different lines in the theorizing of landscape. Drawing on Francesco Petrarch, Alexander von Humboldt, Carl Gustav Carus and Georg Simmel, the German Hegelian philosopher Joachim Ritter argued, more than one generation ago, that the experience of landscape is based upon modern society's rule and control over nature. The aesthetic pleasure of experiencing the natural surrounding as landscape is a specific, secularized phenomenon of modern society. The contemplative view of the cosmos, the metaphysical 'theoria tou kosmou', returns under the conditions of modern society in a completely changed meaning. What, in ancient times, belonged to the privileges of Greek priests or Roman augurs, and then was secularized as a metaphysical activity of philosophers, becomes, in the context of modern society, an activity performed by everyone, during leisure time. For Ritter, the experience of landscape is, in a word, a kind of return to metaphysical totality by way of aesthetic reconciliation (Ritter 1974).

Adorno's thoughts, my second line, are closer to Benjamin. Adorno revises Ritter's theory on two points. First, landscape is to be conceived as natural history. We esteem in cultural landscape the utopian figuration of a reconciliation of nature and culture. We project our longing for reconciliation onto landscape. Cultural landscape is not a pure given but a utopian semblance.

Second, images of cultural landscape are images of 'a memento' (ÄT, p. 102; AT, p. 96). Historical memory and historical mourning must be invested in order to serve the utopian figure of reconciliation between culture and

nature. Adorno stresses the discursive continuity between the aesthetic experience of nature in cultural landscape, and the aesthetic experience of modernist works of art (compare my essay Paetzold 1997, especially pp. 216-222). Both have in common the fact that they are images. Nature appearing as beautiful is not conceived as an object of action. The purposes of self-preservation are transcended in both the work of art and the aesthetic experience of landscape (ÄT, p. 103; AT, pp. 96-97).

Both the theories I have referred to, from Ritter and Adorno, locate the experience of landscape outside the precincts of the city. During the nineteenth century however, there emerged an experience of landscape within the urban space. For most cultural theoreticians, Paris was the place where this shift occurred from landscape outside the city, to cityscape (compare Seel 1991, pp. 230-33). Louis-Sébastien Mercier is supposed to be one of the first authors looking at Paris as a 'picture', as a 'scene' (Mazlish 1994, p. 46). That is to say, Mercier transposed elements of Denis Diderot's concept of the theatre stage to the urban surrounding.

II

After these preliminary remarks, I can now enter the thematic analysis of this essay.

As my point of departure, I take a frame of notions which was introduced by Benjamin. It is the correlation between, on the one hand, the landscape of the modern metropolis, which is labelled as a kind of labyrinth, and on the other hand, the strolling activity of a specifically urban cultural figure which emerged in modernity: the flâneur.

In his "Arcades Project", Benjamin wrote: "The city is the realization of that ancient dream of humanity, the labyrinth. It is this reality to which the flâneur, without knowing it, devotes himself" (Benjamin 1999, p. 429, M6a,4. Compare p. 839, F°13, F°19).

As Kern convincingly has shown in details, the labyrinth as a culturally powerful symbol underwent two historical transformations. Its original meaning as it surfaced in ancient Minoan culture on Crete was that of a ritual group dance which made of young girls and boys grown-ups by relating them to society and the cosmos at large. According to Kern it is important to understand that the labyrinth-dance was graphically drawn as a visual token (Kern 1999, p. 19). The first shift in the meaning of this symbol occured when it was absorbed in ancient Greek and Roman mythology alluding to Troy, as we can find in Homer's "Iliad", later in Virgil's "Aeneid", Plutarch,

Ovid, Strabo and others. Ancient Roman culture brought about the second transformation of the labyrinth's meaning. The ancient Romans related the labyrinth-dance to the act of founding a city (Kern 1999, p. 114). As we will see later in this essay, Benjamin picked up especially this meaning but gave a new twist to it in that he attributed it not to the foundation of the city, but to the modern urban everyday. At any rate Benjamin took on the city-relatedness of the symbol of the labyrinth which belongs, to repeat, to ancient Romans' legacy.

To come back to the Benjaminian flâneur-labyrinth constellation: In that the flâneur experiences the urban scene as a "cityscape", as Benjamin literally says, the "old Romantic sentiment for landscape" is replaced by a "new Romantic conception of landscape", the "cityscape" (Benjamin 1999, p. 420, M2a, 1). Whereas the old Romantic experience of landscape was spatially located outside the city, the metropolis has become "the properly sacred ground of flânerie" (Benjamin 1999, p. 421, M2a, 1). The flâneur, Benjamin argues, explores the cityscape as a dialectic between "the interior as street (luxury), and the street as interior (misery)" (Benjamin 1999, p. 909). That is to say, the flâneur is, first and foremost, interested in the "social space of the metropolis" (Frisby 1994, p. 84). The "sensational phenomenon of space", "the 'colportage phenomenon of space'", the "Kolportagephänomen des Raumes" is the flâneur's "basic experience" (Benjamin 1999, p. 418, M1a, 3).

Although Benjamin's use of the notions of the flâneur and of flânerie is often ambivalent and contradictory, I would like to suggest the following interpretation. The simplistic origins of flânerie exercised by the 'physiologists' (M. Bon-Homme's "Le Flâneur au saison" [1806], Louis Huart's "Physiologie du Flâneur" [1841] among others) were set aside by writers like Honoré de Balzac and Victor Hugo, who celebrated the "artist-flâneur", and of course by Charles Baudelaire, who became Benjamin's favorite model (Ferguson 1994, pp. 22-42; Burton 1994, pp. 2-6). They – especially Balzac and Baudelaire – revealed the reality of the modern metropolis as an endangered, contradictory totality.

If we compose Benjamin's various reflections on flânerie into one concept, then it could be shown that he had a cultural history in mind leading from the soothing cityscapes of the physiologists through the urban allegories of Baudelaire, and ending in Baron de Haussmann. The dialectic of flânerie which had related the interior of the houses to the public spaces of the streets, and which had its urban site in the arcades, came to an end. It was caused by the introduction of the grand boulevards of Haussmann, on the one hand, and by the emergence of the department stores on the other. Both these shifts in the urban fabric destroyed the sources of flânerie which were, to reiterate, deriving from the entwinement of the interior as house and as street.

In "Charles Baudelaire" (1938), Benjamin gave the following description of the highlight and decline of flânerie: "If the arcade is the classical form of the *interior*, which is how the *flâneur* sees the street, the department store is the form of the *interior's* decay. The bazaar (Warenhaus) is the last hangout of the flâneur. If in the beginning the street had become an interior for him, now this *interior* turned into a street, and he roamed through the labyrinth of merchandise (Labyrinth der Ware) as he had once through the labyrinth of the city" (Benjamin 1973, p. 54).

It is noticeable here that Benjamin relates the strolling activity of the flâneur to the labyrinthian structure of the city. According to Benjamin, the flâneur experiences the crowds of the modern metropolis as a kind of shield but also as an object of observation. The flâneur is not only drawn to the streets and their architecture, but also to the social spaces where crowds gather, like railway stations, exhibition halls and department stores. The flâneur explores the 'labyrinth of the populace', the 'human labyrinth' of the metropolitan masses.

As Benjamin says: The "masses" "stretch before the flâneur as a veil: they are the newest drug for the solitary. – Second, they efface all traces of the individual: they are the newest asylum for the reprobate and the proscript. – Finally, within the labyrinth of the city, the masses are the newest and most inscrutable labyrinth." (Benjamin 1999, p. 446, M16,3).

I would now like to summarize my discussion of the flâneur, before moving on to look at the notion of the labyrinth. It is my contention, that we have to understand flânerie as an ambivalent cultural and political activity, which emerged in the run of the nineteenth century, but continues into our own times. The flâneur is related to the detective in sharing the latter's concern with observing the crowds in the streets. For this reason, a flâneur could become an agent of the state's secret service. The flâneur shares with the photographer an interest in the visual culture of city life. He produces literature and works of art, as exemplified by Baudelaite, Charles Dickens and Edgar Allen Poe, and also Edouard Manet and Edgar Degas. Flânerie is also the origin of modern sociology. The genre of urban ethnography, in particular, is rooted in the urban activity of strolling, as the examples of Siegfried Kracauer, Franz Hessel, Georg Simmel, Robert Ezard Park, and Henry Mayhew can show (see Frisby 1994). For my argument here, it is important to recognize that flânerie is not just strolling around and gaping, but it transforms urban observation into cultural work. If we include Benjamin himself in the group of passionate flâneurs, then we can conclude that flânerie is related to a critical cultural theory of city life. As Chris Jenks wrote: "The *flâneur*, though grounded in everyday life, is an analytic form, a narrative device, an attitude towards

knowledge and its social context." (Jenks 1996, p. 148). The moving body is involved here, strolling through the labyrinth of the modern metropolis, but the phenomenological experiences must be linked to the symbolic structure of culture.

Speaking in terms of philosophy, we may argue that the flâneur portrayed by Benjamin is a post-metaphysical subjectivity. He is to be clearly distinguished from Plato's Socrates in that he has no guaranteed community to whom to address his reflections. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'promeneur' was as lonely as the flâneur, but found his moral identity at the borderline between city and countryside. Nietzsche's Zarathustra did not even enter the metropolitan city. But insofar as the flâneur depends upon walking, he is also clearly distinguished from Rorty's postmodern ironist. At the end of my essay I shall come back to this point.

Although the flâneur takes the distancing position of the visual observer, he is by no means the dispassionate cognitive subjectivity of modernity, but rather the organ of modern culture. Contrary to the modern urbanist whose theorizing of the city aims at practical intervention in the design of the city – if we think of Ildefonso Cerda, Baron Georges Eugène Haussmann and Le Corbusier – the flâneur attempts images of modernity. A flâneur might be a poet, a painter, a journalist, a sociologist or a cultural theorist (see my essay Paetzold 1995).

It is true, and has often been pointed out, that the nineteenth-century flâneur was largely a male gendered cultural figure (compare Shields 1994, especially pp. 63, 66-67. Wolff 1994, especially, pp. 124-130). But if we look at the many traces in Benjamin's writing which leave the male-centredness of culture behind, we can even find access to feminist approaches, especially if we bring to bear Julia Kristeva's theory of culture (Weigel 1996, pp. 63-79).

III

Now I can pick up the thread of my discourse. The flâneur experiences the modern metropolis as a labyrinth. Benjamin has called the labyrinth "that ancient dream of humanity" which has been realized in the modern city. How should we understand this? The labyrinth of the metropolis is a pregnant Gestalt the symbolic meaning of which is mythically underpinned. The image points towards daily encounters with metropolitan reality. The big city in which we live, day in and day out, appears in the image of a labyrinth. This image refers not least to the opacity and impenetrability of everyday urban life.

A look at Joseph Rykwert's "The Idea of a Town. The Anthropology of

Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World" (1985) may help to clarify the meaning of Benjamin's notion of the labyrinth. According to Rykwert, the foundational myths of the city comprise not only the fixing of an axial cross (cardo, decumanus), of a centre (mundus), of borders and gates, but also the image of a labyrinth (Rykwert 1985, pp. 148-153). The myth of the labyrinth is mostly about how to find access to the city. A riddle must be solved or a heroic action is required, before one is allowed to enter the centre, that is: the world. Usually, the mythic hero needs the aid of a woman who is later left in the lurch, or is going to be killed; Ariadne, for instance, guiding Theseus through the Cretan labyrinth. Without doing injustice to Rykwert's theory, we may take a clue from it. We can distinguish between foundational myths (Romulus and Remus or Cain, as heoic founders of cities) and those which refer to the maintenance of a city life. The myth of the labyrinth can be attributed to the latter category. It presupposes the foundation of a city to which access must be gained, or even regained.

The symbol and myth of the labyrinth, as Kern, Rykwert, and Karl Kerenyi have shown, were often accompanied with dance; the maze dance, by which the victory of the hero is ritually celebrated. The dancers perform and position themselves in a spiral form. Generally speaking, we can distinguish between the spiral or double-spiral form, and the rectangular form, as abstract graphic representations of the labyrinth. The point is, however, that the moving body within a labyrinth does not 'know' of this overview, and is puzzled by the choices to be made at each new junction.

Benjamin's image of the labyrinthian city is not about the question of the foundation of the city, but on the contrary seeks to describe the everyday life of the modern metropolis. The labyrinth is a convincing Gestalt, by which city life can be captured. The city is not a jungle but a labyrinth. Due to the labyrinthian structure of the metropolis, the conduct and behaviour of the city-dweller is slowed down. "The labyrinth", Benjamin says, "is the home of the hesitant. The path of someone shy of arrival at a goal easily takes the form of a labyrinth." (Benjamin 1985a, pp. 30-55, here: p. 40). We should not, in the first instance, think of problems by which to orientate ourselves; rather, the experience of city life by way of aimless strolling is what is at issue here.

Although Paris with its arcades were Benjamin's original source for thinking about city life in terms of the labyrinth, he nevertheless applied this idea to his "Berlin Childhood around 1900". Here he states that to experience the city as a labyrinth requires "schooling". It is a kind of "art". He wants to make a parallel between his personal memories and an intersubjectively valid 'image' of the city of Berlin: "Not to be able to find one's way in a city doesn't mean much. To stray in a city as one strays in a forest, however, requires training.

The street names must speak to the wanderer like the snapping of dry twigs, and the little streets in the heart of the city should reflect the times of day to him as clearly as does a hollow on a mountainside. I learned this art late; it fulfilled the dream of which the first traces were labyrinths scrawled on the blotting paper of my notebooks... The path into this labyrinth... led over the Bendler Bridge..." (Benjamin 1991, Vol. IV 1, p. 237. Translation according to Weigel 1996, p. 137).

Within a labyrinth we are aware of all our actual steps and moves. We are deprived, however, of an overview of the whole. We give ourselves over to the topographies of the space we are in. We become motivated to come to grips with the whole – it emerges, at any rate. But we cannot afford to meet this demand. Orientation within the city has much to do with the magic of the street names. It is this magic which gives the locations within a city a cultural inscription, and at the same time it is the magic of street names and of urban areas which prompt us to wander through the city.

In his essay on post-revolutionary Moscow, Benjamin says that he had already made an image for himself of the topography of the city before he entered it. But bodily contact with the streets and houses, during his flânerie, only made him experience the labyrinthian structure of the city (Benjamin 1991, Vol. IV 1, pp. 318-19). We touch, here, upon an important point. In order to reveal the city as a labyrinth, it is necessary for a meeting to take place between a layer of experience which can be described phenomenologically, and a symbolic level. Phenomenology must receive a symbolic structure in order to become historical and critical (Benjamin 1985b, p. 175; compare Gilloch 1996 pp.135-139, 149-167, 171-177. Compare Weigel 1996, pp. 48, 119).

IV

As far as I can see, Benjamin himself has given three explanations for the labyrinth of the modern metropolis:

First, the labyrinth is connected with the market as the prevailing model of sociality. It is the market which structures the actions and conduct of men. "The labyrinth is the correct route for those who always arrive at their goal anyway. The goal is the market." (Benjamin 1985a, pp. 30-5, here: p. 40). In this context we must think of the curiosity provoked by the passages and the luxurious commodities displayed in them; the impeded actions caused by the need to look at the prices of the goods. The rules of the market, however, are also valid for the cultural productions to which the flâneur is devoted. The

flâneur as producer must look to the value of the cultural commodities he offers, and how he can sell them to his advantage.

Secondly, Benjamin offers a drive-based economic explanation for the labyrinth (of the metropolis). According to Freud, before it can be satisfied a drive leads a life in episodes (Benjamin 1985a, p. 40). The drive shifts its goal; it must pass through different instances before it is satisfied. Freud's psychoanalysis, which Benjamin appropriated during the 1920's, starts from the principle that there is no substantial core to the self, it is decentred. For this reason, within the biography of a self there are always only temporary compromises to be found between the claims of the drives and the cultural instance of the 'I'. Within flânerie, which reveals the labyrinthian aspect of the metropolis, the modern subjectivity, without a substantial centre, finds its adequate expression. The flâneur experiences the contemporary as episodes of the 'Now'; as instances or moments which are unconnected.

Sigrid Weigel has pointed out that Benjamin uses the image of the labyrinth as an image for reconstructing a person's biography. A spatialization of memory is presupposed here. It replaces genealogy in terms of origin, and family in terms of scenes and locations by passages and pathways (Weigel 1996, pp. 123-124).

Thirdly, the labyrinthian of the metropolis can be interpreted as an image for a mankind which does not wish to know where things are leading (Benjamin 1985a, p. 40). Here, of course, we find Marx' idea that the capitalist mode of sociality has created a second nature, by which human beings are determined in reverse. Dreams and images brought forward by culture are necessary in order to keep open the process of social change. But Benjamin attempts to penetrate dream images with the rationality of the concept, in order to reach an awakening.

In this context, one has to remind oneself of Benjamin's distancing from Surrealism. According to Benjamin, the cultural strength of Surrealism consisted in the rehabilitation of the dream-world. Dreams had been categorically rejected by Descartes and modern rationalism. Benjamin did not favour simply the flourishing of dreams, like the Surrealists. He took capitalism to be a kind of dreaming sleep into which humankind had fallen during modernity, and from which it should be awakened. "Capitalism was a natural phenomenon with which a new dream-filled sleep came over Europe, and through it, a reactivation of mythic forces. The first tremors of awakening serve to deepen sleep." (Benjamin 1999, p. 391, K1a,8 and K1a,9; see Buck-Morss 1997, pp. 270-274).

For Benjamin, the rise of socialist movements produced just such tremors or stimuli for an awakening. They needed to be strengthened. He wanted to

reach a "constellation of awakening", whereas the Surrealists remained in the world of dreams. This constellation of awakening was projected by Benjamin as 'paralleling', as convergence between the rational notion and the sensuous image. In his "Arcades Project" he stated: "Delimination of the tendency of this project with respect to Aragon: whereas Aragon persists within the realm of dream, here the concern is to find the constellation of awakening. While in Aragon there remains an impressionistic element, namely the 'mythology'.., here it is a question of the dissolution of 'mythology' into the space of history." (Benjamin 1999, p. 458; N1,9).

Benjamin's theory of the collective dream has a parallel in Ernst Bloch's thinking. According to Bloch, daydreams are characterized by the features of enrichment of subjectivity, of opening up new horizons, and of pointing to a telos of successful 'endings'. Daydreams want to be 'realized'. Like Benjamin, Bloch interpreted the daydream as something which is not rational in its own terms, but which is nonetheless accessible to a collective rationality.

V

Let us return to the labyrinthian of the metropolis. As I have said, the labyrinthian is connoted with concepts such as the market, the psychic life of drives in episodes and finally the capitalist character of society. How can the labyrinthian function as a clue for an understanding of concrete urban phenomena? I would like to point to at least two aspects.

The first is related to the street. According to Benjamin, the labyrinthian of the city receives profile as a synthesis of two different 'horrors' or 'dreads'. The modern street, the infinite 'asphalt tape' on which the flâneur tramps, is characterized by monotony and aimlessness. It never ends, but this very endlessness is attractive and fascinating. The way (Weg), on the other hand, refers to a mythical horror. We do not know where it is leading and this makes us anxious. It could be a maze. The labyrinth of the city synthesizes both of these structures, the 'way' and the 'street'. Benjamin writes: "'Street' to be understood, has to be profiled against the older term 'way'. With respect to their mythological natures the two words are entirely distinct. The way brings with it the terrors of wandering (German: Irrgang HP), some reverberation of which must have struck the leaders of nomadic tribes. In the incalculable turnings and resolutions of the way, there is even today, for the solitary wanderer, a detectable trace of the power of ancient directives over wandering hordes. But the person who travels a street, it would seem, has no need of any waywise guiding hand. It is not in wandering that man takes to the street, but

rather in submitting to the monotonous, fascinating, constantly unrolling band of asphalt. The synthesis of these twin terrors, however – monotonous wandering – is represented in the labyrinth." (Benjamin 1999, p. 519; P2,1).

Here we have an excellent example of the way that Benjamin brings together the phenomenological 'essence' of a way, a pathway, in contrast to the street, and the symbolic inscription of this essence into cultural history and collective memory. The way is a horror because it is embedded in the process of the migration of tribes. The asphalt tape induces not just a funny walk, in the lonely stroller, the flâneur, but also a dread. As a modern phenomenon the urban labyrinth is nurtured by both of these aspects, it offers a paradoxical pleasure and at the time it causes a threat.

The modern metropolis has a labyrinthian structure in that it relates the 'Inside' and the 'Outside', as well as the 'Above' and the 'Beneath', of the urban geography in a new way. We need to distinguish between a gate and a triumphal arch; both signify thresholds, that is, modes of passages. The city gate mediates the entrance to the world; triumphal arches, on the other hand, transform those who pass through them in that the glory of the conquering hero is mirrored onto the passer-by. However, both gate and arch have lost their mythical strength as either initiation rite or as elevation (Benjamin 1999, pp. 86-87; C2a,3).

Not only does the modern metropolis redesign the relationship between the 'Outside' and the 'Inside', it also relates the passages 'Beneath' – the underground tunnels, the grottoes, the arcades – with life on the ground 'Above'. For this reason, the metaphysical dichotomies of a central core and a periphery outside, a hierarchical 'Above' and a seductive 'Beneath', disappear. Benjamin compares the correspondence between 'Up' and 'Down' with dreaming and waking: "One knew of places in ancient Greece where the way led down into the underworld – a land full of inconspicuous places from which dreams arise. All day long, suspecting nothing, we pass them by, but no sooner has sleep come than we are eagerly groping our way back to lose ourselves in the dark corridors. By day, the labyrinth of urban dwellings resembles consciousness; the arcades (which are galleries leading into the city's past) issue unremarked onto the streets. At night, however, under the tenebrous mass of the houses, their denser darkness bursts forth like a threat, and the nocturnal pedestrian hurries past – unless, that is, we have emboldened him to turn into the narrow lane." (Benjamin 1999, p. 875; a°,5).

The second aspect: The experience of the labyrinth implies that one's location is well determined, although it cannot be inscribed into a co-ordinating network. This double-layered structure characterizes the passage through the labyrinth. The city-dweller experiences the differences in

atmospheric tuning between urban quarters, but they are not integrated into a unified scheme. The metaphysical significance of the quarters vanish, since the centre as the site of 'truth' is devalued.

Nevertheless, boundaries remain; thresholds which give structure to the regions. Benjamin refers, in this context, to the modes by which we experience borders within the dream. They are experienced as cuts, which cause surprise, but these cuts do not follow a rational, but rather a poetic order. The experience of the metropolis is interwoven with such dream traces. It is precisely this which constitutes the labyrinthian of the metropolis.

"The city", Benjamin says, "is only apparently homogeneous. Even its name takes on a different sound from one district to the next. Nowhere, unless in dreams, can the phenomenon of the boundary be experienced in a more originary way than in cities. To know them means to know those lines that, running alongside railroad crossings and across privately owned lots, within the park and along the riverbank, function as limits; it means to know these confines, together with the enclaves of the various districts. As threshold, the boundary stretches across streets; a new precinct begins like a step into the void – as though one had unexpectedly cleared a low step on a flight of stairs." (Benjamin 1999, p. 88; C3,3).

VI

Now we have some essential structures of Benjaminian theory of the urban lifeworld at hand. In the concluding part of my essay I would like to outline a position which maintains some distance from Benjamin, whilst remaining faithful to his 'Critical Theory', by transforming it.

Benjamin's question as to whether we should continue the social dreams of the nineteenth century, or bid farewell to them, is only to be answered from the position of our situation today, that is, in the decline of functionalist urbanism, to which Benjamin subscribed.

In the 1960's, the Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck introduced the vision of a 'labyrinthian clarity', in order to characterize the mutual relationship between the architectural building and its site within the urban texture. He published a manifesto-like text in the "Situationist Times" (No. 4, October 1963), starting from the tradition of Dutch structuralism and opposing Le Corbusier's functionalist creeds. The programmatic core of his manifesto was: "The large house – little city statement (the one that says: a house is a tiny city a city a huge house) can get on very well... It possesses a kind of clarity that never quite relinquishes the secret it guards. It is above all... a kind neither

house nor city can do without. Let me call it labyrinthian clarity." (van Eyck 1963, p. 84).

Not only did Aldo van Eyck inspire architects in their designs, such as Herman Hertzberger, Lucien Lafour, or Theo Bosch, he was actively engaged in the urban renewal of Amsterdam's Nieuwmarkt during the 1970's and 1980's. On the other hand, in his "La Production de l'espace" (1974) which has been translated to English in 1991 Henri Lefebvre traced the symbolic meaning of the labyrinth back to a "military and political structure", designed to trap enemies inextricably in a maze, before it served as "palace", "fortification", "refuge" and "shelter". The labyrinth expresses a "natural principle" within the Greek idea of Logos/Cosmos (Lefebvre 1991, pp. 233, 240).

What these references are arguing for is the thesis that cityscape as labyrinth is still an inspiring idea, beyond Benjamin. As I have argued, the labyrinth and the flâneur are related concepts. That is to say, only by strolling do we experience the city as a labyrinth.

Today we find different theories which can give new meaning to the notion of flânerie. I would like to single out just two new modes of understanding flânerie:

On the one hand we have Michel de Certeau's "Walking in the City" (De Certeau 1993, pp. 151-160). De Certeau develops a "rhetoric of walking" (De Certeau 1993, p. 158). His is a strategy of concentrating on everyday life and focusing on walking in order to overcome the functionalist view of the city as a view from above, in order to control: "urban life", he emphasizes, "increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded, 'walking'" (De Certeau 1993, p. 155), that is to say the accent is on the "chorus of footsteps" (De Certeau 1994, p. 157). A rhetoric of walking is a "style of use", that is "a way of being" and "a way of operating". De Certeau's walker makes use of the urban spaces by bringing in his/her own body in movement. But this walking activity aims at a "poetic geography" of urban sites (De Certeau 1993, p. 159). A rediscovery of "local legends (*legenda*: what is *to be read* but also what *can be read*)" (De Certeau 1993, p. 160) emerges; that is to say, a phenomenological level. Merleau-Ponty spoke of a 'style' of bodily moves; we experience the body insofar as it is put into action: Physical motion and symbolic level are intertwined. De Certeau makes use of two Benjaminian notions in this respect, the 'labyrinth' (De Certeau 1993, p. 152) and the 'dream', as means of clarifying the "pedestrian rhetoric" (De Certeau 1993, p. 160).

What is important here is the fact that de Certeau's walker aims at a 'poetic geography'. That is to say, 'narratives' which reveal cityscapes in cultural

'works', undermining both the functionalist view of the city from above and the 'disciplinary' power structures which supervise the city-dwellers through the official, administrative politics of the state institutions. Michel de Certeau is in favour of micro-narratives linked to the moving and strolling body. He gives a new meaning to the concept of the flâneur.

Another stimulating model is involved in Jinnai Hidenobu' s 'spatial anthropology'. In his book "Tokyo" Jinnai Hidenobu tells the cultural story of Tokyo. The story makes use of city walks. These walks, however, are to be related to a scholarly reading of city maps from different periods, as well as to a scholarly reading of the poetic narratives of the specific sites of the city, the water-side, the former commoners' houses, the backstreets etc. "We have become so accustomed to travelling by subway or elevated highway that we have become insensitive to the rich variety of features found in everyday life. 'Reading the city', requires us to walk in streets and experience its spaces for ourselves. Only then do we acquire a feel for the development of its neighbourhoods." (Hidenobu, 1995, p. 9).

VII

This brings me to a concluding remark: Richard Rorty has launched an influential view of postmodern culture, which describes it as being inhibited by ironists who are in search of continuous redescriptions of their lives and of the moral state of society, and who are restlessly reading and consuming books. Philosophy is replaced by literary criticism in order to improve the morality and the political culture of the liberal community. The philosopher emerges in the guise of a 'polypragmatic' who has to link the various discourses together in order to keep the conversation of society on relevant issues going. Against this elitist and bodiless idea of a community, I would like to propose a revitalized 'Critical Theory' which is anchored in urban culture and in cultural workers (see for a step in that direction Paetzold 2000). These bear the imprints of city walks exercised by real bodies. They are curious about urban affairs, and want to make sense of city life today in that they produce at the same time city-related poetic matters.

The Benjaminian project is not at all confined to Baudelaire. It has been continued by a remarkable chain of writing city-dwellers, ranging from literary figures, such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Peter Handke, Konstantin Kafavis, Eric de Kuyper to Paul Auster and Thomas Pynchon (Lehan 1998). They all are inspired by city life and bring to surface what its specific culture is.

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ART AND CULTURE IN THE WORK OF FREDRIC JAMESON

ERNEST ŽENKO

I

It has often been noted that Fredric Jameson is "probably the most important cultural critic writing in English today,"[1] or, as Perry Anderson put it in his introduction to Jameson's *Selected Writings on the Postmodern*, "the most arresting and impressive theorist of postmodernism".[2]

First of all, I would like to point out that there is a considerable problem related to the acceptance of his theory. I share the opinion that the acceptance of his work in general, and particularly his writings on culture, postmodernity and globalization, are culturally dependent, and therefore far from being universal, even if we regard them within the so called Western World.

Although Jameson can be considered a central figure in contemporary theoretical thought and cultural debates within the United States (and probably in Canada), until recently he had received relatively little critical attention within Western Europe. As Sean Homer pointed out in a 1998 book about Jameson,[3] one does not find the sheer welter of introductory and expository texts that one does for most major continental theorists (Derrida, Baudrillard, Foucault, etc.).[4] How can we account for this relative ignorance?

The first reason is probably a consequence of the fate of Marxism in Europe. "While Marxism and work within a Marxist framework have undergone

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[1] This is an often-repeated quotation from Colin MacCabe from his Preface to Jameson's book *The Geopolitical Aesthetics: Cinema and Space in the World System*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1995, p. ix.

[2] *Cf.* Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998*, Verso, London 1998.

[3] Sean Homer, *Fredric Jameson: Marxism, Hermeneutics, Postmodernism*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 2.

[4] His *Reader* actually appeared in 2000. *Jameson Reader* (ed. Michael Hardt), Blackwell, 2000.

a significant revival in the US since the early 1970s, in continental Europe there has been an unremitting 'demarxification', to use Jameson's term [...]."[5] Marxism has been displaced by alternative theoretical discourses, such as structuralism, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis, but its declining influence must be also seen in the context of politics and society at large: "Eurocommunism, Maoism and Trotskyism all in their different ways suffered political defeat in the 1970s and proved unable to meet the aspirations of a generation radicalized through the student protests of 1968 and the emerging new social movements."[6]

Jameson is, of course first and foremost a Marxist thinker and insists on the continuing relevance of traditional Marxist concepts, including history, class struggle, reification, commodity fetishism and the totalizing nature of (late) capitalism. In his view, the radically changed political and theoretical climate does not mean that Marxism should be abandoned, but that it should rethink some or most of its fundamental tenets. Jameson's work therefore remains within the Hegelian-Marxist framework, formulating a kind of non-dogmatic Marxist cultural practice that he finds appropriate for late capitalism.

The second reason for the relative ignorance of Jameson is the historical specificity of his discourse. His work is often criticized for being historically and culturally too constrained and, moreover, as specifically North American. "His overriding concern with the universalization of capitalism and with thinking or representing the totality of the world economic system cannot be separated from his position as a theorist within the only country, the United States, that can at present aspire to global hegemony."[7]

It is therefore not a surprise then, that his specific understanding of the so-called "Third World" can be problematic, especially for "Third World" readers. In one of his essays about "Third World" literature we can find an example of overgeneralizing, showing his distant view: "Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic – necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society.*"[8] To substantiate this claim Jameson proposes a reading of a work by (only) two writers, one Chinese (Lu Xun) and one Senegalese (Ousmane Sembsne). The question is, how is it possible to reduce the heterogeneity and diversity of "Third World" literature

[5] Homer, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[8] Fredric Jameson, "Third World Literature in an Age of Multinational Capitalism", *Social Text*, vol. 15 (1986), p. 69.

to only two examples, and is it really possible to say that all "Third World" literature always constitutes national allegories?

Jameson's overly totalizing logic, which treats "Third World" as a homogeneous whole, is a problematic concept, and as Aijaz Ahmad, a writer from Pakistan, noted after reading Jameson's essay: "I realized that what was being theorized was, among many other things, myself. Now, I was born in India and I am a Pakistani citizen; I write poetry in Urdu, a language not commonly understood among US intellectuals. So, I said to myself: '*All?* ... *necessarily?*' ... The farther I read the more I realized, with no little chagrin, that the man whom I had for so long, so affectionately, even though from a physical distance, taken as a comrade was, in his own opinion, my civilizational Other."[9]

It is not possible to misread the fact that in Jameson's text the Third World is defined solely in terms of its experience of colonialism. And, as Robert Young critically recognized: "It is hard, however, to avoid the conclusion that his insistence on socialism's development as a global totality involves a form of neocolonialism: 'we Americans, we masters of the world' know what is best for everyone else. The attitude does not change whether the prescription be capitalism or socialism."[10]

For Jameson only Marxism can offer us an adequate account of "the essential *mystery* of the cultural past [...] These matters can recover their original urgency for us only if they are retold within the unity of a single great collective story [...] only if they are grasped as vital episodes in a single vast unfinished plot."[11] The concept of history is one of the most relevant concepts of Marxism, but in this particular case, the question is: whose history is Jameson talking about? And if the history of the world (the First, the Third, and after all the Second) comprises a single narrative – whose narrative is it? Whose unfinished plot? Put into the critical words of Young: "There is no need to recover an original urgency if you live in a State of Emergency."[12]

This history is obviously the history of the West: the history of modernization and the rise of capitalism. And, even more, no one is "allowed a history outside the 'us' – that is Western civilization and the Western point of view, which for Jameson seems to mean the USA."[13] This *US-centrism* is

[9] Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'", *Social Text*, vol. 17 (1987), p. 3.

[10] Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Routledge, London and New York 1995, p. 112.

[11] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1986, pp. 19–20.

[12] Young, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

[13] *Ibid.*

probably one of the most problematic aspects of Jameson's thought and also at the moment bears the blame for the aforementioned ignorance or disagreement.

II

Let us suppose that it is possible to distinguish between two major phases in Jameson's work, particularly if we are interested in his comprehension of art and culture – between the pre-postmodern and the postmodern. His early works (his first book on Sartre, *Sartre: The Origins of a Style*, originated as his doctoral thesis and was published in 1961) are not concerned with the analysis of the contemporary situation, let alone contemporary art and culture. He was, to be sure, writing about art (realist and modernist, and he even already in 1971 anticipated the conditions of postmodern art), however, his main interests were somewhere else: his intent was, so to speak, to pave the way for all of his future activities. And he was, furthermore, preparing the milieu for the acceptance of Marxism in United States.

His book *Marxism and Form* (1971) evidently shared this special task. Under its title Jameson published a variety of studies of the major figures of Western Marxism (Sartre, Adorno, Lukács, Benjamin, Marcuse, Bloch), which he carried out from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. He was concerned with the introduction of the unfamiliar tradition of European Marxism and cultural critique to a North American academic readership. Each of these authors was concerned with art or culture, and in this sense, Jameson was writing about art and culture from the very beginning of his career; only that he was writing almost without exception through their own eyes, using here his technique of "close reading", resulting in a situation where it is very difficult to distinguish between the original text and Jameson's own reading or interpretation of it.

The Prison House of Language, published in 1972, brought to the American public a critical survey of the tradition of Russian Formalism and French structuralism. The next important book, *The Political Unconscious* from 1981, posed the primacy of Marxism from a global and totalizing perspective, as a final untranscendable horizon. Marxism is "the absolute horizon of all reading and interpretation,"[14] wrote Jameson. This book provided sustained intervention in contemporary theoretical debates, first of all, on the contemporary theories of Althusser, post-structuralism and deconstruction. But in all these works an analysis of the contemporary situation was missing.

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[14] Jameson, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

Although in *The Political Unconscious* Jameson mostly focused on literary modernism, this does not mean that he was unconcerned with other forms of contemporary culture, as his writings on film, painting and science fiction testify, but that until the early 1980s modernism remained in the center of his theoretical project.[15] However, *The Political Unconscious* differs from earlier works in at least one important feature. Jameson was here not only presenting other thinkers, or other ideas (using his "close reading" technique), but for the first time he also presented his own theoretical and philosophical positions.

However, when in 1984 Jameson published what was to become his most influential and popular single essay, "Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", his field of research and criticism drastically changed. Nevertheless, this "sudden break" was not a break in his thought (a conversion from modernism to postmodernism), but could rather be seen as its simple and necessary continuation. As Douglas Kellner pointed out, this text presented, "the culmination of a series of historical and theoretical studies which provide part of the methodology, framework, and theoretical analyses requisite for a theory of contemporary society which Jameson conceptualizes as a product of a specific historical trajectory: the transition from a discrete national system of state/monopoly capitalism to an interlocking system of multinational corporate capitalism".[16]

This essay is therefore not a departure from his earlier works and ideas but, on the contrary, as a conceptualization of postmodernism it represents the culmination of his ideas introduced already in an article about Theodor Adorno in 1968.[17] It is therefore the culmination of his "efforts to introduce, defend, and develop the Marxian theory in a climate and situation often ignorant of or hostile to the radical tradition of which Marxism is a key component."[18]

It should be further noted, that already in the preface to his *Marxism and Form* (1971) Jameson had been aware (probably under the influence of Baudrillard and Debord) of the changed terrain in which Marxist criticism found itself at that time. He pointed out the difference between everyday experience and the global expansion of the capitalist system, the development of the postindustrial society, the dominant role of the image in society, the fragmentation of the subject, the dissolution of metaphysics etc. All these

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[15] *Cf.* Homer, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

[16] Douglas Kellner (ed.), *Jameson – Postmodernism – Critique*, Maisonneuve Press, Washington 1989, pp. 2–3.

[17] Fredric Jameson, "On Politics and Literature", *Salmagundi*, no. 2–3 (1968), pp. 17–26.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

issues can be regarded as representing the essential characteristics of the postmodern debate which appeared a decade later. Or, in the words of Homer, "the preface can be seen as a description of postmodernism *avant la lettre.*"[19]

Kellner suggested that such fragments from Jameson's earlier work anticipate his later theoretical concerns. This view, in which the focus is set to a single coherent narrative of Jameson's *oeuvre*, has to be confronted with the changes in his work that are necessary in order to theorize the changing cultural, political and theoretical conditions. If he wrote in the preface to *Marxism and Form* that "a Marxism for which the great themes of Hegel's philosophy – the relationship of part to whole, the opposition between concrete and abstract, the concept of totality ... – are once again the order of the day," two decades later things seemed to change. In his Wellek lectures, published in 1991 as *The Seeds of Time*, the "great themes of Hegel's philosophy" no longer appeared appropriate for the analysis of contemporary (that is, postmodern) culture.

III

Jameson, however, did not completely abandon Hegel's philosophical approach. In the article "'End of Art' or 'End of History'?" published in 1994, Jameson sheds some more light upon his understanding of art (as well as philosophy and consequently theory), and attempts to map the history of art after Hegel.[20]

For Jameson the question of the end of art is therefore connected with the question of history. For him it is clear where we are now (even if we do not use the notorious term *postmodernity*): we are, according to Jameson, in a situation which is marked by a merging of fields, so that "economics has come to overlap with culture: that everything, including commodity production and high and speculative finance, has become cultural; and culture has equally become profoundly economic or commodity oriented".[21]

Jameson argues that there were actually two different "ends of art", and leads us back to Hegel, to the source of this debate. In Hegel's view everything

[19] Homer, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

[20] Debates about the "end of art", and the "end of history" are not specifically postmodern, but of course derive from Hegel and his ideas about history.

[21] Fredric Jameson, "'End of Art' or 'End of History'?", *The Cultural Turn*, p. 73. One gets the impression that something is missing in this picture; that there should be some missing link between culture and economy, namely the society itself. In the picture that Jameson paints this is not the case; in his view culture and economy do not need mediation through society, which is why the very notion of society remains blurred.

is tied up in the famous triadic progression (thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis). Two of them are particularly relevant at this point: that of *absolute spirit*, passing through phases of *religion*, *art* and *philosophy*; and that of art itself, as it passes through local stages of the *symbolic*, the *classical*, and the *romantic*.[22] Art moves "towards the end of art, of course, and the abolition of the aesthetic by itself and under its own internal momentum, the self-transcendence of the aesthetic towards something else, something supposedly better than its own darkened and figural mirror – the splendour and transparency of Hegel's utopian notion of philosophy itself, the historical self-consciousness of the absolute present ... in short, the shaping power of the human collectivity over its own destiny, at which point it founders (for us here and now) into an incomprehensible, unimaginable, utopian temporality beyond what thought can reach."[23]

This absolute present will also turn out to be "the end of history". But, according to Jameson, whatever reading one chooses to make of Hegel's final stage of art, or after that stage, few historical prognoses have been so disastrously wrong. "Whatever the 'end of art' may mean for us, therefore, it was emphatically not on the agenda in Hegel's own time. And, as far as the other part of the prophecy was concerned, the supersession of art by philosophy, he could not have chosen a worse historical moment for this pronouncement either".[24]

Hegel was of course – and paradoxically – at least in Jameson's view, the last traditional philosopher. His writings were later subsumed and transformed in and by Marxism as a kind of post-philosophy and, furthermore, his thought occupied the philosophical terrain so completely as to leave little room for any others.

Unexpectedly, and suddenly, we are confronted with the "end" of philosophy rather than the "end of art". But, as Adorno has argued (in a somewhat different context): "[P]hilosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realize it was missed."[25] From this perspective Jameson argues: "[T]he dissolution of art into philosophy implies a different kind of 'end' of philosophy – its diffusion and expansion into all realms of social life. [...] It ends, in other words, not by becoming nothing but by becoming everything: the path not taken by History."[26]

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[22] Jameson rehearses such triads elsewhere when he talks about three stages of art – realism, modernism and postmodernism –, tied to three stages in the development of capitalism.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[25] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, Collected Works Vol. 6, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1977, p. 15; quoted in Jameson, "'End of Art' or 'End of History'?", p. 81.

[26] Jameson, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

How could this happen, or better, what did happen according to Hegel himself? (Art ended up as philosophy, which did not happen.) To understand this particular moment (for Jameson, surprisingly, not a moment in history, but a moment in Hegel's philosophy), we have to read Hegel's *Aesthetics*: "Just as art has its 'before' in nature and the finite spheres of life, so too it has an 'after', i.e., a region which in turn transcends art's way of apprehending and representing the Absolute. For art still has a limit in itself and thereby passes over into higher forms of consciousness. This limitation determines, after all, the position which we are accustomed to assign to art in our contemporary life. For us art counts no longer as the highest mode in which truth fashions an existence for itself."[27]

What Hegel wrote here concerns a particular time in history: modernism (or, what we understand under modernism in the arts), laid claim to a unique mode of apprehending and representing the Absolute. Or, at least, it wished to be for us "the highest mode in which the truth claws its way into existence. ... Modernism found its authority in the relativization of the various philosophical codes and languages, in their humiliation by the development of the natural sciences, and in the intensifying critiques of abstraction and instrumental reason."[28] But the ways in which the authority of philosophy was weakened and undermined cannot be said to have simply allowed art to develop alongside it, as a kind of alternative path to an Absolute. In this sense, argues Jameson, Hegel was right: an event took place, the event he named "the end of art". And, continues Jameson, the fact is that a certain art ended.

Of course, the supersession of art by philosophy, as Hegel assumed, did not occur. Rather, something else has happened: a new and different kind of art suddenly appeared to take philosophy's place after the end of the old art. This new art wanted to supplant the philosophy that was, or was meant to be, the "highest mode in which truth manages to come into being [die höchste Weise, in welcher die Wahrheit sich Existenz verschafft]". This art was then (and still is) known as modernism.[29]

However, we are still confronted with two types of art, two types that had

[27] G. W. F. Hegel, *Ästhetik*, Berlin 1953, pp. 102–103; quoted in Jameson, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
[28] Jameson, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–83.
[29] How modernism (and consequently postmodernism) is understood depends upon its definition. Confusion arises because it is used as both an aesthetic category and a term for cultural phenomenon, which coincides with a particular epoch of history. Jameson's description (it is hardly a definition) is in this sense closer to cultural phenomenon than to an aesthetic category, even if the latter is not excluded. *Cf.* Michael Newman, "Revisiting Modernism, Representing Postmodernism: Critical Discourses of the Visual Arts", in: *Postmodernism: ICA Documents* (ed. Lisa Appignanesi), Free Association Books, London 1989, pp. 95–96.

already been known and theorized in Hegel's day and even before: *the Beautiful* and *the Sublime*. Jameson here follows Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, who has claimed that what we call modernism will eventually be identified with the Sublime itself. "Modernism aspires to the Sublime as to its very essence, which we may call trans-aesthetic, insofar as it lays a claim to the Absolute, that is, it believes that in order to be art at all, art must be something beyond art."[30] On the other hand, that kind of art whose end Hegel foresaw is (in the light of Kant) to be identified as Beauty. It is hence the Beautiful that comes to an end in this famous "end of something" event, but what replaces it is not philosophy (Hegel was therefore wrong) but rather the Sublime itself; in other words the aesthetic of the modern.

The Beautiful also did not really die. It died in Hegel's eyes in the sense that it has no relationship with the Absolute. It also died in the eyes of the modernist artist. Otherwise, the supersession of the Beautiful by the Sublime is accompanied by the persistence and reproduction of secondary forms of the Beautiful: the Beautiful survives as decoration (without any claim to truth). This is, in short, for Jameson the picture of the first "end of art". However, nothing seems to have stopped there, and everything seems to be getting worse. Therefore, it is possible to see the arrival of another "end of something".

For Jameson the second "end of art" began in the 1960s, when, in his poetic words "the world was still young". If the world was then young and innocent (how it is possible to claim something like that for a period of the Cold War remains a minor secret), the question is, why was this end of art (at least in Jameson's view) political? "I think it would scarcely be an exaggeration to suggest that the politics of the sixties, all over the world [...] was defined and constituted as an opposition to the American war in Vietnam, in another words, as a world-wide protest."[31]

This, however, is an important issue. For Jameson the very deployment of the theory of the (second) "end of art" was political insofar as "it was meant to suggest or to register the profound complicity of the cultural institutions and canons, of the museums and the university system, the state prestige of all the high arts, in the Vietnam War as a defense of Western values: something that also presupposes a high level of investment in official culture and an influential status in society of high culture as an extension of state power."[32]

The sign of this second "end of art" is in Jameson's view the emergence of happenings, which could hardly be imagined as having opened the way to

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[30] Jameson, "'End of Art' or 'End of History'?", p. 83.

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 75. This exaggeration is another example of the aforementioned US-centrism.

[32] *Ibid.*

the final realm of philosophy any more than the end-of-art's nineteenth-century equivalent had. The second "end" is related to the process of the dissolution of the modern, to the cultural process that led to the emergence of Theory. It is the Theory which supplanted traditional literature and extended across a broad range of (old-fashioned nineteenth-century) disciplines: from philosophy (which is now – in the sense of Baudrillard – everywhere and dead), anthropology and linguistics to sociology, effacing boundaries between them.

Jameson argues that, "This grand moment of Theory (which some claim now also to have ended) in fact confirmed Hegel's premonitions by taking as its central theme the dynamics of representation itself: one cannot imagine a classical Hegelian supersession of art by philosophy otherwise than by just such a return of consciousness (and of self-consciousness) back on the figuration and the figural dynamics that constitute the aesthetic, in order to dissolve those into the broad daylight, and transparency of praxis itself."[33]

The "end of art" of this period at the end of modernity was not merely marked by the disappearance of the great authors of modernism from 1910 to 1955, but was accompanied by the emergence of now equally famous theorists such as Lacan, Barthes, Baudrillard, Derrida, Žižek and Jameson himself.

Jameson argues that Theory emerged from the aesthetic itself, from the culture of the modern; hence for him the aesthetic is not only a part of the Beautiful, but in modernism a part of the Sublime as well. He makes a conclusion that could be expected: "Perhaps it might be argued ... that Hegel was not so terribly wrong after all; and that the event in question could at least partially be grasped as a dissolution of figuration at its most intense into a newer form of lucidity ...".[34]

On the other hand, this is only partly true; for the function of the Sublime is taken over by Theory, while the Sublime is only one part, or one half of art (or, better, of the aesthetic). The other half of art (after its first end, of course) is the Beautiful, and it is this other part, the Beautiful, "which now invests the cultural realm at the moment in which the production of the modern has gradually dried up."[35]

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[33] *Ibid.*, p. 85.
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] *Ibid.* p. 86.

IV

We are now already deep in the postmodern debate, concerning the return of the Beautiful and the decorative instead of the older (modern) Sublime, and the abandonment by art of the quest for the absolute or of truth claims. What remained as art is a source of sheer pleasure and gratification. Therefore both Theory and the Beautiful constitute the second – postmodern – end of art, and even tend to block each other out. The 1970s appeared in Jameson's view to be the age of Theory, the 1980s a period of consumption. Even Theory itself has become commodified. On the other hand, the return of the Beautiful appeared as a colonization of reality by visual and spatial forms.

This is the reality of late capitalism; still, the main question remains unanswered after the double "end of art": Can the Sublime and its successor, the Theory, restore the philosophic component of postmodernity, and crack open the commodification implicit in the Beautiful? If philosophy is dead and theory cannot threaten the commodification implicit in the system of multinational corporate capitalism (for the theory itself is also commodified and without critical potential) what is the role of art? Can art be critical?

In one of his earlier essays (1977) Jameson claimed that art itself has an important social and political role to play. It is vital that art (in this passage he is writing about new realism in contrast to modernism) is able "to resist the power of reification in consumer society and to reinvent that category of totality which, systematically undermined by existential fragmentation on all levels of life and social organization today, can alone project structural relations between classes as well as class struggles in other countries, in what has increasingly become a world system."[36]

Nevertheless, the circumstances have changed and instead of discussing the realism/modernism issue (new realism evidently did not solve the problem) Jameson was more and more involved in the modernism/postmodernism debate. However, according to Jameson, it is difficult if not impossible to search for the critical potential in postmodern art, and with the conflation of high art and popular culture, the search for critical aspects of art/culture became even more problematic.[37]

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[36] Fredric Jameson, "Reflections on the Brecht-Lukács Debate", *The Ideologies of Theory. Essays 1971–1986. Syntax of History*, Vol. 2, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1989, pp. 146–147.

[37] It should be mentioned here that postmodern art from the Central/Eastern Europe proved that it could carry strong critical potential.

To mention but one example, Jameson claims that Warhol's paintings are not strong political statements. Even though we can trace both the modern and postmodern traits of Warhol's work (this is not only an issue in the case of Warhol, but also in other "postmodernist" artists also mentioned by Jameson, most notably the writer Thomas Pynchon), Warhol is for Jameson one of the key postmodern artists. On the one hand, it is not difficult to see why: if we disregard all that Jameson writes about his works (depthlessness, specific colors, particular technique, concern with consumerism, etc.) and focus on the question of history, we get a postmodern artist *par excellence*: not only his paintings are without history or narrative, the artist himself made a great effort to efface his own history, even the date and the place of his birth.

On the other hand, it is possible to claim – contrary to Jameson – that there is some hidden critical potential in Warhol's work. As Sartre pointed out on various occasions, it is not possible *not to choose*, for the decision of *not making a choice* is already a choice. If we look at Warhol's work from this standpoint, we can find in his "political silence", in this absence of criticism that stares us in the face, exactly his own political statement. This may be a kind of immanent criticism that is the only promising way of doing criticism within the global system of multinational capitalism. The question if such a critique is acceptable for Jameson remains, however, unanswered.

* * *

Jameson was actually seeking a kind of art that would be able to challenge the culture of late capitalism, but without success. However, Islamic fundamentalistm seems to be the only alternative to multinational capitalism at the moment, but at the same time not a solution we would be glad to accept. It is not possible to step outside this system, or to destroy it (and we do not want to, either). But as some recent Hollywood films, such as *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) or *The Matrix* (Larry and Andy Wachowsky, 1999) show, it is possible (not for contemporary art in this case, but for popular culture) to preserve some of those critical aspects, once reserved for philosophy, and it is they that probably represent the kind of "art" that Jameson was looking for.

We can now be almost certain that the form of (new) realism that Jameson was writing about in 1977 is not a proper solution for a critical art of this kind, and that the film *Fight Club*, which ends with the collapse of the whole system of capitalism (symbolized by the demolishment of the skyscrapers belonging to multinational corporations) also did not succeed to offer an acceptable and reasonable alternative. As Jameson would have put it decades ago, it is not the content, but the form that counts.

The SF film *The Matrix*, on the other hand, is much closer to Jameson's (and also the Althusserian) idea of ideology. In *The Matrix*, which is, according to Adam Roberts, "surely one of the most Marxist films ever to come out of Hollywood,"[38] we can clearly see the importance of totality at work. "The matrix" – computer generated virtual reality – is more than a set of false beliefs about reality, more than false consciousness, and more than "the truth that you are a slave", as Neo (Keanu Reeves) was told, "The Matrix" is reality itself. It defines and conditions thinking, acting, and behavior, in short, it defines peoples' lives. To break the chain of the virtual reality, to defeat the "Matrix", i.e. the whole system, it does not suffice to take care of this or that particular problem. The only way out leads through a full comprehension of the entire system, which is possible only if a total vision, a totality which Jameson never stops to defend, can be achieved.

However in the case of *The Matrix* the situation is relatively simple, because even though it forms a complex system, the spectator has a chance to understand how the "Matrix" works, and he/she can see how it is possible to understand it from within – from Neo's standpoint. This is possible (and necessary for the film to be effective) because the "Matrix" is only a scheme – complex, but graspable. In postmodern reality we are dealing with something much more complex, and even if there is a considerable question whether we will ever be able to grasp it, for Jameson this is an important issue. In a way similar to Neo in *The Matrix*, we should strive for a total vision, attainable through the cognitive mapping of reality.

[38] Adam Roberts, *Fredric Jameson*, Routledge, London and New York 2000, p. 38.

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THE ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE CHINESE CHARACTER FOR "BEAUTY"

JIANPING GAO

1

"Beauty" is translated into Chinese as 美 (*mei*) and "Aesthetics" as 美学(*meixue*) (literally meaning the studies of the beauty). The compound 美学 (*meixue*) is new in Chinese and its origin is due to translation in modern time. But indigenous in China is the word *mei* (beauty), which appearred as early as more than 3000 years ago. The very first question in aesthetics was probably "what is beauty?" The concept of beauty in the mind of ancient Chinese is not necessarily identical with that in the mind of modern people, but an investigation of it may be of some interest to today's aesthetic inquiry, and, as we shall see, it already attracts attention of some scholars in the fields of both linguistics and aesthetics.

"美" (beauty) is traditionally considered to be composed of two characters: 羊 (sheep) and 大 (large). A large sheep will supply plenty of delicious meat. This explanation comes from *Shuowen Jiezi* (100 A.D.), a pioneering book on the research of Chinese characters:

> 美 (beauty) means delicious. It is composed of 羊 (sheep) and 大 (large). Among six domestic animals (cow, horse, sheep, pig, hen, and dog), sheep are the major sacrificial offerings. Beauty is identical with goodness.[1]

This opinion was accepted by almost all philologists in ancient China, such as Xu Xuan (917 – 992), Xu Kai (920 – 974), Duan Yucai (1735 – 1815), Wang Yun (1784 – 1854), and Zhu Junsheng (1788 – 1858), who provided

[1] *Shuowen Jiezi* (literally means "a discription of simply characters and explanation of complex characters") is a dictionary-like book which was intended to explain Chinese characters on the basis of their forms. It was compiled by Xu Shen (30 – 124 A.D.). This paragraph is quoted from the entry of the beauty of this book.

authoritative interpretations of *Shuowen Jiezi* in their own generations separately. It remains to be the most influential conclusion even today. Two of the most influential dictionaries of our times, *Ciyuan* (*The Origin of Words*)[2] and *Zhongwen Da Cidian* (*A Great Dictionary of the Chinese Language*)[3], among many other dictionaries, still put "the delicious" as the first meaning for "beauty". One of the most important Chinese aestheticians, Zhu Guangqian (1897 – 1986), accepted this definition and developed from it a utilitarian concept of beauty by saying that "beauty originated from the flavor of sheep soup."[4] Some scholars outside China also accepted this definition. For example, Kasahara Chuji has pointed out: "The most primitive idea of beauty of the Chinese people, generally speaking, originates directly from the experience of the sense of flavor."[5] This opinion has been widely accepted from 2000 years ago up to today, from the most prominant philologists to the most important aestheticians, and from China to Japan and perhaps to other countries. However, as we shall see, it is probably a mistake. *Shuowen Jiezi* analyses the Chinese character 美 (beauty) by means of its form in the Qin Dynasty (221 – 207 B.C.), i.e. small seal script. The 美 (beauty) is written thus

It is certainly composed of two characters 大 (large) and 羊 (sheep), which are written respectively as

Modern archeology, however, offers us some much older characters: i.e. shell-and-bone script (*jiaguwen*)[6] and bronze script (*jinwen*)[7]:

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[2] *Ci Yuan*, (literally means "The Orgin of Words, Beijing: The Comercial Press, 1988).

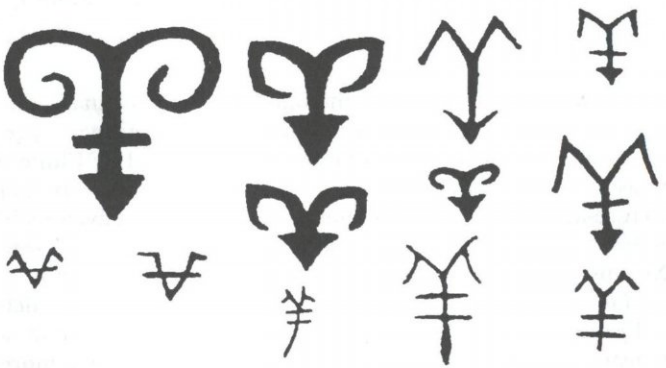
[3] *Zhongwen Da Cidian*, (literally means, "A Great Dictionary of Chinese Words",Taibei: 1967).

[4] Zhu Guangqian, *Letters on Beauty*, (Shanghai, 1980) p. 25. Zhu published voluminous books and papers on aesthetics from 1920s to 1980s, as well as translated many important books, such as Hegel's *Aesthetics* and Vico's *The New Science*, into Chinese.

[5] Cf. Kasahara Chuji, *The Aesthetic Consciousness of Ancient Chinese*. Nohon Hoyu shoten 1979.

[6] Shell-and-bone script was the charcters used in the late Shang Dynasty. The Shang Dynasty existed from ca. the 16 th century to ca. the 11th century B.C. The earliest characters on bones was written in circa 1395 B.C. (See Hu Houxuan, *A Summary of the Research on the Shell-and-bone Script in Late 50 Years* (The Commerse Press, 1951) p. 66. Shell-and-bone scipt, therefore, is the writing from c.14th century to c. the 11th century B.C.

In shell-and-bone script and bronze script, sheep is written to be



It is obvious that only some of the characters for beauty looked like a sheep in the upper part. Thus, there is not much justification for the conclusion that all the characters for "beauty" have "sheep" as their upper part.

Shuowen Jiezi infers "delicious flavor" from the meaning of "large sheep", leading some aestheticians to proclaim that Chinese consciousness of beauty originated from the sense of flavor instead of the sense of sight. Now that the very first question at issue is whether the original meaning of the characer for beauty came from the sense of flavor or from the sense of sight, I consider that a simple rule could be applied here: the original meaning of a word always appears before its extended meanings. There are now a large number of ancient Chinese texts available. If we examine all these texts, especially the oldest ones, we will clearly see what the original meaning of a character is.

[7] Bronze script can be divided into inscriptions on the bronze objects of the Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century – c.11th century B.C.) and those of the Zhou Dynasty (c.11th century – 221 B.C.). But what are concerned here is mainly those of the former.

This is, however, by no means an easy job. There are two things must be done. One is to read all these texts and discern meanings of characters for beauty from the context in which the characters appear. Since there are so many ancient texts, this work is obviously dull and arduous. But, it is even more difficult to ascertain when these texts were severally written and compiled. Many Chinese philologists have been conducting research along this line from as early as the Han Dynasty up to now and tremendous knowledge was accumulated. What I have to do is to make full use of the outcomes of their research and make a choice among the conclusions whenever they do not agree one another.

Here is a sketch of my discoveries: In the *Book of Documents*,[8] the character 美 (beauty) appears twice; neither refers to the "beauty of flavor". In the *Book of Poetry*[9] the character for beauty appears 40 times; none of these refer to the "beauty of flavor". Other ancient books, such as the *Analects*,[10] *Yili*,[11] *Zhouli*,[12] *Zhouyi* (*The Book of Chang*),[13] The *Spring and Autumn Annals*,[14] *Chunqiu Zuoshi*

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[8] *The Book of Documents* was considered to be one of the oldest books in China. Some chapters of it were proved to be written in the early years of the Western Zhou Dynasty (c. 11th century B.C.). Although the authenticity of this book was questioned by Chinese scholars from the Qing Dynasty to the early this century, it is highly probable that part of this book was edited or even re-written by people in later generations. Anyway, we still have some good evidences showing that at least part the book was indeed taking shape in the early Zhou Dynasty. Xu Xusheng managed to present a remote history of China in *The Legendary Ages in Ancient Chinese History Books* (Chinese Science Press, 1960), in which a paper by a scientist, Zhu Kezhen was included. This paper proves the written time of *The Book of Documents* by means of certain astronomical evidence, which seems more convincing than barely textual analysis.

[9] *The Book of Poetry* was allegedly compiled by Confucius (551 – 479 B.C.). Thus it should be a collection of poems or folk songs appeared before or contemporary to Confucius.

[10] *The Analects* was allegedly written and compiled by Confucius's students or student's students. If this was true, the book should take shape in ca. 450 B.C.

[11] *Yili* was also allegedly compiled by Confucius, thus it should be emerged before Confucius. Liang Qichao, *The Authenticity of the Ancient Books* and Their Dating "the seventeen chapters available today probably came out of Confucius's hand. The rites in Zhou Dynasty were overlaborate. Confucius sorted them out and thus made them suitable.

[12] *Zhouli* (*The Rites of the Zhou*) was written in the early years of the Warring States Period (475 B.C. – 221 B.C.), and was revised in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.). Zhang Xincheng, *A General Survey of Ancient Books of Dubious Authenticity*: *Zhouli* is the overall scheme for establishing the country, drafted up by the Confucians who knew the law, rituals and economy in the early Warring States Period. In the early Western Han it was stored in the loyal stacks. Liu Xin saw it during the rule of Wang Mang (9 – 23 A.D.), and published it with his changes.

[13] *Zhouyi* (*The Book of Change*) roughly consists of two groups of texts. One was written before Confucius and compiled by him and was called *Yijing* (*The Classic of Change*). The other was written by Confucius or the followers of him in the Warring States Period, and

Zhuan (the *Zuo Qiuming's Annotations of the Spring and Autumn Annuals*),[15] *Guo Yu* (the *Histories of the States in the Spring and Autumn Period*),[16] *Gongyang Zhuan* (*Gongyang Gao's Annotations of the Spring and Autumn Annuals*),[17] *Guliang Zhuan* (*Guliang Chi's Annotations of the Spring and Autumn Annuals*),[18] *Daodejing*,[19] *Zhuangzi*,[20] *Chuci* (The *Poetry of the Chu*),[21] *Zhanguo Ce* (The *Histories of the States in the Warring States Period*),[22] *Guanzi*,[23] etc., use the character "美" (beauty)

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was called *Yizhuan* (*The Annotations to the Classic of Change*) or *Yidazhuan* (*The Great Annotations to the Classic of Change*). Liang Qicao illustrate a more detailed picture on it in his *The Authenticity of the Ancient Books and Their Dating*: "We should date the drawing of Eight Trigrams to the remote past, date the coupling of two trigrams into hexagrams, Guaci (explanation of the text of the whole hexagram) and Yaoci (the explanation of the component lines) to the early Zhou Dynasty, date Tuanci (the commentary on Guaci) and Xiangci (the explanation of the abstract meaning of Guaci and Xiangci) to Confucius, date Xici (Apprended Remarks) and Wenyan (commentary on the first two hexagrams, the qian or Heaven and the kun or Earth) to the end of the Warring States Period, date Shuogua (The Remarks on Certain Trigrams) and Zagua (The Random Remarks on the Hexagrams) to the time between the Warring States Period, and the Qin and Han dynasties. [Thus we can] observe people's mind and outlook on the world and life in different ages."

[14] *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, which was allegedly written by Confucius. Ban Gu wrote in his "A Biography of Sima Qian" in *The History of the Han Dynasty*: "Confucius wrote *The Spring and Autumn Annals* based on *The Records of the History of the Lu State*."

[15] *Chunqiu Zuoshi Zhuan* was said to have been written by Zuo Qiuming, but it is a disputing issue. It is generally considered to have been written in the early Warring State Period, and revised in the Han Dynasty.

[16] *Guoyu* was also said to have been written by Zuo Qiuming, according to the records of some ancient books, including the *Records of the Historian* by Sima Qian. Some modern Chinese scholars, however, believe that it was written by many historians from 400 – 300 B.C. Cf. Wei Juxian *A Study of Guoyu*.

[17] *Gongyang Zhuan* was said to have been written by Gongyang Gao in the Warring States Period.

[18] *Guliang Zhuan*, was said to have been written by Guliang Chi in the Warring States Period.

[19] *Daodejing* was allegedly written by Laozi (Lao Dan). The *Records of the Historian* by Sima Qian says that Confucius once asked Laozi about the rites (see the *Records of the Historian*, "The Biographies of Laozi, Zhuangzi, Shen Buhai, and Han Fei) then Laozi should live contemporary to or even a little older than Confucius. However, it is still a disputed question about whether extant Daodejing was written by Laozi. Tang Lan, Hu Shi, among other famous scholars, believed that it was written by Laozi. Feng Youlan believed that it was written in the Warring States Period (Feng Youlan, *The History of Chinese Philosophy*). Most Chinese scholars now accepted Feng Youlan's opinion.

[20] *Zhuangzi* was allegedly written by Zhuang Zhou (ca. 369 – 286 B.C.) and his followers. Thus it took shape in the Warring States period.

[21] *Chuci* (*The Poetry of the Chu*) was a collection of the poems by Qu Yuan (c.340 – 278 B.C.) and his followers.

[22] The author of *Zhanguoce* (*The Strategy of the Warring States*) is unknown. *Si Ku Ti Yao* (*Summaries of the Four Categories of Books*) says that it was compiled by Liu Xiang (77? – 6

signifying various meanings, but none of them are the beauty of flavor. The *Book of Mencius*[24] uses the word 16 times and *Xunzi*[25] more than 70 times, but both of them have only one referring to the beauty of flavor respectively.[26] *Mozi* is really an exception. The character 美 (beauty) appears in this book for 40 times, among which as many as three concerning the beauty of flavor. *Mozi* is regarded as having been written by Mo Di (478? – 392? B.C.) as well as his disciples, but this book, as many Chinese scholars have pointed out, took shape as late as the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.).[27] *Mozi* might be able to preserve the ideas of Mo Di and his students, but the recorders and compilers in the Han Dynasty presumably follow the linguistic convention of his own age whenever they revised or edited the ancient texts (if these texts did exist in the Han Dynasty). Another exception is *Liji* (*The Records of the Rituals*). The character for beauty appears in *Liji* for circa 40 times, five of which indicate the beauty of food. The account for it is similar to *Mozi*. This book was written during a long period from the Warring States Period to the Han Dynasty, namely, it retains some texts of the Warring States period, but was revised, replenished and compiled by the scholars of the Han period.[28] The earliest books in which the character for beauty frequently appeared are probably *Lüshi Chunqiu*[29] and *Hanfeizi*.[30] The character for beauty appearred in *Hanfeizi*

B.C.) from various historical records. Luo Genze guesses that it was written by Kuai Tong, a persuasive talker in the early Han Dynasty.

[23] *Guanzi*, though traditionally attributed to Guan Zhong (? – 645 B.C.), was generally believed not written by him, but by certain Legalists in the late Warring States Period.

[24] *The Book of Mencius* was allegedly written by Meng Ke (ca.372 – 289 B.C.?), and there is not much disputation on this conclusion.

[25] Most chapters of *Xunzi* were written by Xun Kuang (331? – 238 B.C.), except for a few by his students or followers. Liang Qichao wrote: "X*unzi* is creditable on the whole. Only seven chapters such as...are probably not completely out of the hand of *Xunzi*. They were recorded either by Xun's disciples or added by people in later generations.

[26] *Mencius*: "Which among the sliced and fried meat or *yangzao* (a kind of fruit) is more beautiful?" *Xunzi*: "It is natural to human beings that their mouthes like tasty food which is taken as beauty."

[27] Guo Moruo, *The Bronze Age*: "The text of Mozi existing today is edited by people of the Han Dynasty." Luo Genze, *An Investigation of the Texts by the Pre-Qin Philosphers* quoted the remarks by Ruan Diaofu: "Mozi became a book as such actually since the Han Dynasty."

[28] He Yisun, *Questions and Answers about the Eleven Classics*: "Question: Who wrote *Liji*?' Answer: "Confuscius made remarks. His seventy-two disciples recorded what they had heard. The Confuscians in the Qin and Han period edited them into a book. Most of them are not the original remarks of Confucius. It is only someone else's remarks under Confuscius's name wherever it refers to Confucius's remarks."

[29] *Lüshi Chunqiu* is a book written by a group of scholars under Lü Buwei (? – 235 B.C.), the prime minister of the Qin state.

[30] *Han Feizi* was written by Han Fei (280? – 233 B.C.), an important Legalist writer. The authenticity of this book is generally creditable.

around 70 times, 10 of which refer to the beauty of food. *Lüshi Chunqiu* describes the food from different parts of China and uses the character for beauty for as many as seven times in a single paragraph. Both *Lüshi Chunqiu* and *Hanfeizi* are books written at the end of the Warring States Period. I have also read books copied on silk in the Han tombs at Mawangdui[31] and found that neither of the two versions of *Daodejing* (*Laozi*) in the tombs use character for beauty referring to the beauty of food or flavor. In all of the other silk-books in the tomb, only one, *Wuxing* (*The Five Agents*, a book or a chapter from a lost ancient book), use the character for beauty twice to refer to delicious food (since this text is not mentioned by other ancient books, we have no direct evidences to decide its written time, but from the philophical ideas appearring in it I suppose that it was written at the end of the Warring States Period or later).

That when and by whom the ancient Chinese books were written is a very complicated question. The versions of the books existing now were usually compiled, revised, replenished by many scholars in the seperate period of the history. What I stated above is only a simple sketch to the whole picture and there is no room for me to describe it at length in this paper. This simple sketch, however, is sufficient for us to get a primary division as follows:

(1) In the Western Zhou Dynasty (ca.11th century – 771 B.C.), the Spring and Autumn Period (770 – 476 B.C.) and even in the early Warring States Period (475 B.C. – ca.380 B.C.), Chinese people by no means considered that delicious food can be "beautiful".

(2) In the middle Warring States Period (ca.380 – ca.280 B.C.), they began to mention the beauty of food occasionally.

(3) In the late Warring States Period (ca.280 – 221 B.C.), the beauty of delicious food began to be frequently talked.

The details of the sketch and the division of the historical phases put forth above are still open to dispute, but it becomes evident that the fundamental fact is indisputable, i.e. the beauty of flavor is not the original meaning of the word. The argument put forward by Xu Shen and his followers is not tenable.

Besides the facts given above, I am fortunate in obtaining further evidence in two books which are comparable to today's dictionaries. One of them is *Erya*, the other is *Guangya*. *Erya* took shape from the Warring States period to the Han Dynasty.[32] It offers two groups of synonyms to "beauty",[33] but none of

[31] Silk Books from Mawangdui Tombs of the Han Dynasty.

[32] Zhang Xincheng, *A General Survey of Ancient Books of Dubious Authenticity*. *Erya* should be a dictionary before and in the Han Dynasty. It was gradually accumulated and added, not by a single person.

them is relevent to the beauty of food or flavor. *Guangya* was compiled in the Three Kingdoms Period (220 – 280 A.D.). It also records a group of synonyms to "beauty", which is quite different from those provided by *Erya*.[34] There are many words in the latter group referring to delicious food or flavor in *Guangya.* The differences between these two books obviously caused by the fact that they edited in different ages. *Erya* was edited earlier, hence it does not explain beauty to be "delicious". *Guangya* was edited in a later period when the "delicious" must have already become one of the major meanings of the character for beauty. *Guangya* was also edited at a time after *Shuowen Jiezi,* therefore it was possibly influenced by the latter.

Now we reach a conclusion that the beauty of delicious food is by no means the original meaning of beauty. From this judgement we may also infer that the character is not composed of large and sheep. Any deductions from it with regard to aesthetics will, therefore, be groundless.

2

I am not the first person to challenge the opinion of "large sheep being beauty". In China, there are at least three opinions opposite to that of "large sheep". The difference between mine and theirs are, first of all, not in the opinions themselves, but in the approachs. What I have done above is to try to find the characters for beauty from ancient Chinese books and study their meanings in particular contexts, hence getting sufficient evidences for my conclusion, rather than guess their meanings merely in accordance with forms of the ideographs. Now, I am going to continue my discussion by commenting these three opinions. These opinions are:

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33 尔雅·释诂上》：暀暀，藐藐，穆穆，休，嘉，珍，祎，懿，铄，美也。《尔雅·释训第三》：委委，佗佗，美也

34 广雅》卷一上：腆，嬒，酏，娑，膱，胋，䐑，膻，醑，皇，翼，滑，棠，賁，膚，熹，琇，甘，珍，旨，酤，烝，將，英，膿，娥，媛，豔，珇，美也。

(1) One part of the character "美" refers to its meaning, and the other part of it refers to its pronunciation. Its representative is Kong Kuangju and Ma Xulun;[35]

(2) Imitating a man wearing feathers on his head. It was suggested by Wang Xiantang and Kang Yin.[36]

(3) Imitating a man wearing sheep horns or a sheep on his head. It was put forth by Xiao Bing.[37]

Among these three opinions, I am first going to comment on "imitating a man wearing sheep horns", then "imitating a man wearing feathers". I will neglect the opinion of the first opinion listed above, because it has already proved to be groundless by Chinese philologists and almost no books mention their ideas thereafter and no influence it has exerted on the aesthetic society.

While we say that "large sheep" is a traditional opinion in China, and is mainly held by philologists but accepted by some aestheticians, "imitating a man wearing sheep horns or a sheep" is now a prevailing opinion in China, especially in the aesthetic society. One of the leading aesthesticians now in China, Li Zehou (1930–), approves of it, though with some hesitation.[38]

Xiao Bing put forward in his paper many arguments, two of which will be discussed in this paper:

(1) 大 (large) in inscriptions on bones and tortoise shells (shell-and-bone script) and inscriptions on bronze objects (bronze script) actually illustrates a man. Thus 美 (beauty) illustrates a man wearing horns or head of a sheep rather than being composed of two characters for "large" and "sheep".

(2) The man who was wearing horns or head of a sheep was the chief or sorcerer of a primitive tribe. He was playing a ritual dance of totemism or sorcery.

With regard to Xiao Bing's first argument, I would like to point out that, as I mentioned above, it is questionable whether the upper part of 美 (beauty)

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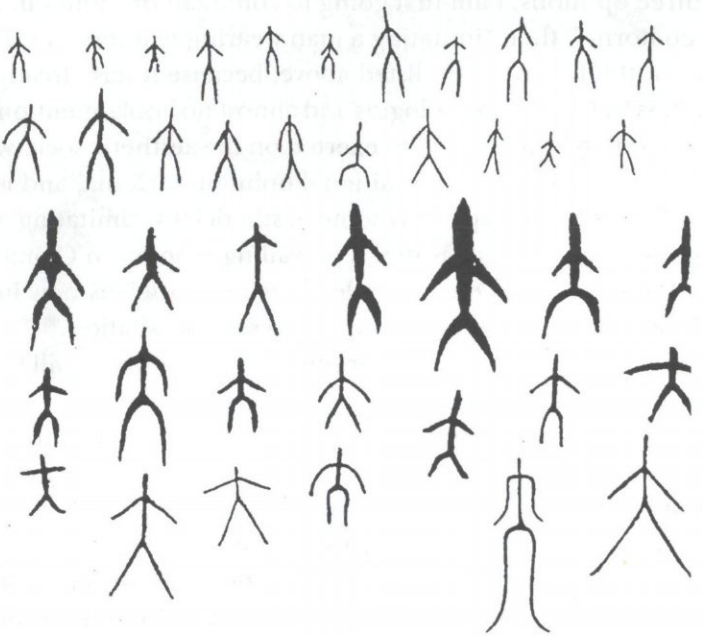
[35] Kong Kuangju, *Inquisition into Shuowen* should be explained as following (sheep) in its meaning and following (big) in its pronounciation. Ma Xulun, *Exegesis of Suowen Jiezi*: "In my mind *mei* must be following the meaning of (large), and following the pronounciation of *yu*."

[36] Wang Xiantang, *Collect Interpretations of Bronze Script*. Kang Yin, *The Souces and Development of Characters*.

[37] Xiao Bing, "From 'Beauty of Big Sheep' to 'Beauty of Sheep and Man', *Beifang Luncong*, 1980 No. 3.

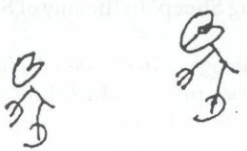
[38] Li Zehou and Liu Gangji, *Zhongguo Meixueshi* (*A History of Chinese Aesthetics*). Vol 1, pp. 79-82. Li Zehou, *Chinese Aesthetics*, pp. 2-10. Li Zehou, *Four Lectures on Aesthetics*, pp. 34-35. Li Zehou declares that he prefers the opinion and phrases it in rhetoric, but also acknowledges that further research is needed.

refers merely to "sheep". The forms of the characters for beauty in shell-and-bone script and bronze script show that some look like horns in the upper part, some look like feathers, and some look like something else. We have no reason to claim that all of them are merely horns, let alone horns of sheep or head of sheep. I agree with Xiao Bing's opinion that the lower part of 美 in shell-and-bone script and bronze script illustrates a man. This judgement was not first suggested by Xiao Bing or me, but by some Chinese philologists. The following are characters 大 (large) in shell-and-bone script and bronze script:



However, I cannot agree with Xiao Bing on that this man is the chief or sorcerer of a primitive tribe. He did not give any evidence to support his argument. The story of a man playing ritual dance of totemism will turn out to be nothing else than his personal fancy.

There are few evidences of totemism in shell-and-bone script and bronze script. One example in shell-and-bone script which may be regarded as keeping a sense of linkage with totemism is the name of a god 羌 (Jun), whose head looked like that of a bird in the writing of shell-and-bone script:



But I would like to point out here that first he was already a god rather than a totemic animal (they belong to different stages of mental development) and second, the totemic animal was a bird rather than a sheep or other horned beasts. I will develop these two arguments later, but now the totemism and its appearance in China require more discussion.

The "classical" representatives of the conception of totemism are James G. Frazer Éile and Durkheim.[39] They put forward an "evolutionary" theory on totemism which believed that human culture was essentially unitary and universal, developing everywhere through the same stages. If we could identify a people who were "frozen" into an earlier stage, we would observe modes of thought and action that were directly ancestral to our own. This "classical" conception of totemism suffered "classical" critique as early as 1910. Alexander A. Goldenweiser pointed out that totemism appeared less as an institution or religion than as an adventitious combination of simpler and more widespread usages.[40] I do not intend to become involved in the quarrels with regard to totemism itself and the "evolutionary" theory. I would like only to say that when Frazer talked about the totemism in China in his four huge volumes of book *Totemism and Exogamy*, he made use of wrong evidences. He believed that many family names of Chinese people contained traces of totemism,[41] which was a total misunderstanding. However, in order to avoid unnecessary disputation, I am ready to make concession to agree that this mistake does very little to undermine the credibility of the book as a whole, since the author mainly based his conclusion on the primitive peoples of Australia and only briefly mentioned China. I am also ready to accept the pronouncements that totemism is a kind of belief which appeared in a particular historic stage when social structures were in the form of clans and economic life was in the form of hunting and collecting. It is still very easy for us to explain why there are few evidences of totemism in the archeological discoveries in China: The cultural remains of ancient China available now were produced in a historic stage much higher than that of totemism.

Turning back to the discussion of the Chinese character for beauty, we can narrow the range of discussion on totemism to the time when the characters appeared rather than all Chinese history. As I put forth above, the earliest occurrence of *mei* 美 available are shell-and-bone script and bronze script, which have mostly been unearthed from the ruins of the Shang Dynasty.

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[39] The more recent writings on totemism, *e.g.* by Sigmund Freud and Claude Lévi-Strauss, seem of no direct relevance to our discussion.

[40] Goldenweiser, Alexander A. "Totemism: An Analytical Study", *Journal of the American Folk-Lore* 23 (1910):179-293.

[41] J. G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*. Vol. II, pp. 338-339.

The Shang Dynasty lasted 600 years from the 16th century to the 11th century B. C., but shell-and-bone script unearthed only in Anyang, the so-called Yin Ruin. The Shang Dynasty moved its capital many times, with the last and longest capital in Anyang (Some scholars now argue that Anyang is not the capital of the Shang Kindom, but its "Archives", but this difference of opinions does not affect our reasoning). Thus shell-and-bone script available now go back to the latter half of the Shang Dynasty. According to some specialists, the earliest shell-and-bone script was written in the 14th century B.C. It is a time when agriculture already replaced collecting natural products (argriculture appeared in China as early as 8000 years ago), at least in the Shang nation;[42] animal husbandry also took the place of animal hunting;[43] there existed a strong central government, with a huge adiministration, army and prison, etc. instead of clans and tribes in primitive society. With regard to the spiritual life of the Shang people, the shell-and-bone script tells us that there is God (帝) in the heaven, who can issue orders for wind, rain, the victory or defeat of a war, etc.[44] Such a God can never be produced in an age when totemism dominated the spiritual life of a people.[45]

Although the facts are very clear, I am still going to make another concession, i.e. to agree that after the end of the totemic life of a nation, traces of totemism would remain in the cultural life of a nation for a very long time. The outcome of the most advanced thinking could have coexisted with the oldest one in the same community. Some modern Chinese scholars proclaimed that they have discovered some vestiges of totemism in ancient China. According to them, however, the totem of the Shang people is a bird rather than a sheep. *The Book of Poetry* says,

> The Heaven decreed that the black bird,
> Flew down to generate the Shang people,
> Who would live on the vast land of the Yin.[46]

Evidence can be found in other ancient books. The *Records of the Historian* says that the mother of Qi, the earliest ancestor of the Shang people, is Jiandi. She became pregnant after swallowing eggs of the black bird and then gave birth to Qi.[47] In *Lüshi Chunqiu*, a beautiful story was developed based on this

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[42] Archeological evidences show that ancient Chinese began their agricultural life as early as 8000 years ago, whereas the Shang Dynasty existed only from 3500 to 3000 years ago.

[43] Even sheep was a sort of domestic animal.

[44] cf. Chen Mengjia, *A General Introduction of Bone Characters of the Yin Ruins.*

[45] Cf. L. Lévy-Bruhl: *La Mentalité Primitive.*

[46] The *Book of Poetry*, "Black Bird".

[47] Sima Qian, *Records of the Historian*, "The History of the Yin (Shang)".

record. This record coincides with archeological discoveries. According to archeologists the tribes of eastern primitive China worshipped birds. The Shang people originated from the east. It is very probable that they once worshipped a kind of bird; sheep never enjoyed such a position in the whole history of the Shang people. It is evident that Xiao Bing's arguments are totally wrong.

The story does not end with our doing away with Xiao Bing's opinion. A new version of the totemic idea on the character of beauty emerged as if the self-contradiction of Xiao Bing's opinion had already been sensed. The new idea connected the character of beauty with another character 羌 (*qiang*). *Shuowen Jiezi* explains the character 羌 as shepherds in the west. From this, a story has been produced: sheep or goat played an important role in the economic life of the Qiang people. They worshipped sheep or goat and took it as their totemic animal. A sort of totemic dance was developed and the dancer would wear horns of sheep or sheep on their head. The Qiang people contributed dancers to the ruling family and nobles of the Shang nation. The dancing of those dancers was considered by the Shang people to be so beautiful that they created the character of beauty after these dancers. It seems to be an interesting story, but it is not proper to take it as a scientific conclusion without giving any evidence.[48]

(1) Since the Qiang nation had already gone in for animal husbandry, its civilization was, though lower than that of the Shang people, much higher than that of the typical totemic peoples in Australia and North America, whose economic lives were mainly based on hunting and collecting. It is, therefore, hardly likely that the Qiang people would still take sheep or goat (even if they had done so in the remote past) as totemic animal.

(2) Suppose a dance of totemic meaning to the Qiang people still existed in the times of the Shang Dynasty (though it seemed impossible), this dance would not keep the same meaning to the Shang people. A cultural phenomenon constantly occurred in the history: a symbol that was religiously significant to a nation would lose this significance and gained simple or "pure" aesthetic meaning to another nation. The Shang people had their own beliefs and were proud of their civilization. They would never accept the cult of a people whom they regarded as barbarians. They could enjoy the dance of the Qiang people, but would never worship it. Even if all these stories are true, therefore, we still cannot say that the Shang people had totemism in mind

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[48] Li Zehou and Liu Gangji, *A History of Chinese Aesthetics*. Vol 1, pp. 79-81. Li Zehou, *Chinese Aesthetics*, p. 2.

when they were creating the character of beauty. Needless to say, almost all evidences are against this story.

3

We have discussed two opinions on the origin of the concept of beauty in ancient China, and revealed that they are obviously against the historical facts. Besides them, there are some other opinions about the character 美 (beauty) in China. However, only the two discussed above have been accepted by aestheticians and regarded by them as having certain connections with the origin of aesthetic consciousness of ancient people. It might stimulate us to consider why the farther an opinion falls short of facts, the greater the opinion exerts an impact on the aesthetic society. Thus I would like to say something here before other opinions occupy our attentions.

"The beauty being composed of large and sheep" is an opinion deeply influenced by the philosophy and aesthetics of Confucian school. It is seen clearly from the judgement "beauty is identical with goodness" by *Shuowen Jiezhi*.[49] Contemporary Chinese aesthetics, especially after 1949, has been developing in the framework of Marxism rather than Confucianism. Marx and Engels, however, did not write aesthetic monographs. Although their aesthetic ideas were implied in their writing on other subjects, they did not articulate it systematically. When Chinese people constructed their Marxist system of aesthetics, therefore, they had to feed in something from other sources. What they would supply were inevitably elements of Confucianism, even though some of those Chinese Marxists proclaimed themselves against Confucianism. Thus a utilitarian tendency naturally appeared in their understanding of beauty. They were willing to locate the origin of "beauty" in their daily life. Thus "large sheep" perfectly meets this need. No matter how difficult it is for us to accept an opinion such as this after discussions above, it is fair to say, this opinion played an active role for a period and once served as a weapon in struggling against a more dogmatical aesthetic thought. The reason for this is that, although this opinion bears a strong shade of utilitarianism, it still stresses the relation of beauty to human beings, rather than regarding beauty as an attribute of objects without any connection with human beings.[50] However, since it does not agree with the new discovery of

[49] Goodness is the translation of Chinese character 善(shan), which also means virtue. I am going to write another paper to discuss the relation of beauty to goodness (or virtue) in ancient China.

[50] Cf. The so-called "great discussion of aesthetics" in China in 1950s and early1960s

archeology and prevailing aesthetic ideas, this opinion has gradually been losing its strength, though it still appears in various dictionaries as an opinion of philology.[51]

Xiao Bing appeared as a challenger in the disputes on the origin of the character of beauty. He is not the first to question the conclusion of "large sheep",[52] but the first, it seems to me, to make the traditional conclusion on the origin of the beauty a matter of disputation in the aesthetic society of China.

Xiao Bing's totemistic pronouncement on the origin of aesthetic consciousness emerged in the nick of time to extricate some Chinese aestheticians from such a predicament, i.e. the need of, after repudiating the conception of "beauty of flavor" as the origin of aesthetic consciousness, finding a new utilitarian conception to take its place. Totemism is a good choice. Totemism, from our perspectives, is perhaps no more than a superstitious belief, but in the mind of the primitive peoples, it is a belief, according to Frazer and Dukheim, of tremendous consequence to their acquiring a means of livelihood, selecting sexual mates and consequently establishing social structures. This opinion, therefore, is rapidly accepted by some aestheticians with Li Zehou as their representative. Li Zehou stresses that beauty exists in human society. He also accepted the idea that a utilitarian evaluation of an object comes ahead of an aesthetic one,[53] which was suggested by, among others, Russian Marxist G. K. Plikhanov. It seems, therefore, natural to him that, in primitive society, totemism and utilitarian conception of aesthetics are combined together.

The aesthetic views of Li Zehou are important in the contemporary China. It shows that Chinese scholars have been trying to get some real discoveries in the general framework of Marxism and the coverage permitted by the

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among Zhu Guangqian, Li Zehou, Cai Yi (1906-1991), and many other important Chinese scholars.

[51] Plato condemned in his dialogue *Hippias Major* the idea that delicious food could be beauty, too.

[52] That the character 美 (beauty) looks like a man wearing feathers on his head appeared earlier than that of Xiao Bing. But since it has little influence on aesthetic society, I would like to comment on it later.

[53] I merely plan to present specific discussions on some of his specific ideas in this paper. Li's idea is the most influential one in China, and, even those who are challenging his ideas agree that Li's idea is the most worthy to converse with. If this discussion has any potential theoretical meaning, that is beyond the limit of this paper. I put this issue to Prof. Li, and he considered what I was trying to do it is to add a new floor to the great mansion of human ideology. Is it possible that such a new floor provides aesthetics a new point of departure? Only a careful researching work can prove that, rather than an emotional criticism.

authoritative ideology. The endeavors they have been making should never be forgotten by history. But we cannot stop at the place where he reached.

China is a country ruled by Confucianism for more than 2000 years. Although there have occurred many anti-Confucian movements in China in this century, Confucianism would stubbornly come back in varied appearances. It could sometimes appear in the form that a thinker himself sincerely tries to break with the Confucian tradition and considers himself to be creating an entirely new idea, but his idea turns out to be one which filled with the worn-out spirit of ancient times. In this paper we cannot discuss the issue of tradition and innovation in general, but have concentrate on the origin of aesthetic consciousness. The concept of "large sheep" regards the beauty of flavor as the origin of aesthetic consciousness, in order to come to a conclusion that "beauty shares the same sense with goodness". This idea is central to the aesthetics of the Confucian school (here I refer to the ideas of the Confucian school, rather than Confucius's personal points of view with regard to aesthetics). The concept of "beauty imitating a man wearing horns of a sheep" explains the origin of aesthetic consciousness with totemism. This view has revised the disgusting aspect of the opinion "large sheep" with its directly utilitarian shade. It stressed the spiritual and cultural features of the origin of the aesthetic consciousness, while kept the essential position of Confucian aesthetics: "beauty shares the same sense with the goodness."

It is still a hard mission now in China to go beyond Li Zehou's aesthetics in an active, progressive direction (rather than somebody criticized Li Zehou in a dogmatist way by barely quoting some words or sentences from Marx or Engels, Lenin, Stalin, or Mao Zedong). The aesthetic thought of Li Zehou embodies the ideological characteristics of a transitional period. It is difficult to complete such a transition of thought and culture before the social transition is completed. His ideas will still dominate Chinese aesthetic field for some time to come. In the new century, many Chinese scholars, especially young scholars, will challenge the last representative of Chinese traditional aesthetics. However, to predict this process goes far beyond the scope of this paper. What I can do now is only to limit my discussion to the origin of aesthetic consciousness.

4

Now it is the time to present my proposition on the origin of the character *mei* 美. Before I get down to it, I have to offer a short comment on another opinion mentioned above, i.e. that the character 美 (beauty) looks like a man wearing feathers on his head.

The conception of "wearing feathers" was suggested by Wang Xiantang and Kang Yin.[54] It agrees with some characters for beauty in shell-and-bone script and bronze script, but mismatchs the others. These two philologists do not give further evidences for their proposal. Thus, it appears to be no more than a conjecture based merely on the form of the characters.

It seems to me that two pieces of evidence can be exploited in supporting this conjecture. One is that almost all primitive peoples prefer to adorn themselves with feathers. Another is that the Shang people may have taken the bird as their totemic token in a period long before the establishment of the Shang Dynasty. But these two evidences are far from enough to lead to a conclusion.

Before I present my pieces of evidence to support a conclusion, I would like to summarize my standpoint in commenting on the above ideas. I totally reject the opinion of "large sheep" and the idea of "the beauty of flavor". I reject the practice of attaching totemism to the opinion that the character 美 "looked like a man wearing horns of a sheep", but I do not totally reject the opinion itself. Namely, I agree that, the character 美 could be imitating "A man wearing horns of a sheep", but it would not be implying the sense of totemism. I question the opinion that the character 美 looked like a man wearing feathers because it is short of evidences, but acknowledge its right to exist as a conjecture.

After making the judgements above, I would like to put forth three groups of evidences favoring my conclusion.

First, the original meaning of a word should appear in the context of the oldest books, whereas the extended meaning of this word should appear in later books. Among all the ancient books I studied above, three were surely written before Confucius, i.e. the *Book of Documents*, *Yijing* (the earlier parts of *the Book of Change*) and the *Book of Poetry*. In the *Book of Documents*, beauty appears twice, once in "Shuo Ming", another in "Bi Ming". The first refers to the beauty of political affairs and the second refers to the beauty of clothes. Since "Shuo Ming" turns out to be an apocrypha and was written probably as late as the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317 – 420 A.D.), we can leave it out. Another ancient book, the *Book of Change*, is constituted of many parts written at different time. Since the character 美 does not appear in those parts written before Confucius, we can leave them out, too. 美 appears in the *Book of Poetry* for 42 times, most of which refer to the beauty of man and woman. Only twice does it refer to the beauty of objects, and both references are in the "Quiet Girl".

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[54] Wang Xiantang, *Collect Interpretations of Bronze Scripts*. Kang Yin, *The Souces and Development of Characters*.

One refers to the beauty of the red stem of plant, another to the beauty of a shoot. Still, the author added such a sentence: "It is not the shoot that is beautiful, it was given me by a beautiful girl." We can, therefore, give a primary conclusion that, the earliest meaning of beauty refers to the beauty of men or women, or those in beautiful clothes.

Second, since the original meaning of beauty might be the beauty of human beings, the character "美" must look like a man or woman wearing certain ornaments. As I mentioned above, these ornaments might be horns of sheep, ox and some other animals, or feathers of certain birds. I propose, however, that the Chinese character of beauty imitates a man with some coiffure rather than some particular ornaments. Archeology tells us that as early as in the ruins of the Yangshao Culture (the Neolithic Age, about 6000 – 8000 years ago), many hairpins were uncovered. In Banpo near Xi'an, there are 715 pieces of hairpins unearthed, 113 of them are in the type of "T". In the ruins of the Shang Dynasty, where shell-and-bone script was unearthed, we have much more evidence to show that the ornaments were highly developed. The Shang people had very exquisite jade hairpins and the jade men unearthed also show that they have various hair styles.

Now let us see two characters:

It is obvious that these two characters look like a man wearing neither horns of a sheep nor feathers of a bird.

Since we have found many evidences showing that the Shang people have highly-developed ornaments for the head and other parts of the body (fig 1),

Figure 1:

I propose that the character for beauty might imitate a man with some hair style or with some ornaments on his head. We have seen that all the characters for beauty are similar on the under part which refers to a person. But the upper part of each of those characters looks quite different. I acknowledge that some of them look like person wearing horns and some of them look like men wearing feathers, but there are still some of them that look like neither of those above. The point is that, if this character can be written in different ways, the Shang people might have no unanimous idea on it. They agreed on merely one thing, i.e. that the beauty is a person wearing something. No matter what the "something" is, the only requirement is that, it makes the person beautiful.

To wear some ornaments or have some hair styles is not the only way to make a man or a woman beautiful. But, since ideograph can only suply a symbol, whereas it is difficult to illustrate a person with ornaments on his or her neck, wrists, or waist, or to illustrate him in certain clothes, the easiest way is to draw some lines presenting the hair style or the ornaments on the head.

To repeat my ideas presented above: Though I have proposed that the character for beauty in ancient China might imitate a man or a woman with some ornaments on his head or of some hair style, I still do not take it as an absolute conclusion. I also agree with those who believe it might imitate a man with horns or feathers on his head. What is really significant, however, is that, since the Shang people wrote it in different way, it implies that they might diverge on which ornament were more beautiful, and each of them might write according to the way they believed to be more beautiful.

From these arguments, we can reach a conclusion, which is very simple, but is significant to aesthetics: the Shang people wrote the character *mei* 美 simply by imitating a beautiful person. They imitated such a person simply because they thought a human being was possible to be beautiful. This is the sign of the origin of their aesthetic consciousness, not for the cause of religion, nor for the cause of direct feeling of mouth or tongue.[55]

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[55] This paper was written in the 1982 in Chinese and, after rejected by several journals, was published in an unimportant journal in 1988 in the end. I am delighted to know that *Hanyu Dacidian* (*The Great Dictionary of Chinese Words*, published in 1993) explains the first meaning of mei as *meiguan* "Good looking", rather than "delicious" as given by *Ciyuan* and almost all the other important dictionaries. However, such a significant change has yet to be noticed by aestheticians in China.

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THE NOTION OF "ORIENTALISM" IN THE MODERNIZATION MOVEMENT OF CHINESE PAINTING OF HONG KONG ARTISTS IN 1960s: THE CASE OF HON CHI-FUN

Eva Kit Wah Man

Reflections on different perspectives of postcolonial writing

I was born and brought up in a British colony that originated as a backward fishing port and then developed into a contemporary international city. It went through all the stages and stabilizations that Stuart Hall listed: industrialization; capitalism; urbanization; formation of a world market; social and sexual division of labor; distillation of civil and social life into public and private spheres; and identification of Westernization with the notion of modernity itself.[1] Hong Kong was – and still is – struggling between an older, corporate, enclosed, defensive mentality that retreats into nationalism and national cultural identity, and a global postmodern one that at the same time overcomes and incorporates differences.[2] Nothing about the culture of this colony is pure or homogenous, and the nature of hybridity discloses inner differences, contradictions, segmentations, and fragmentations.

I remember I went to a protestant church every Sunday, learning from the Bible that I should not believe in any other God, and came home to eat lunch prepared by my grandmother that consisted of items from the rituals of worship presented to our ancestors.

Questions about cultural identity such as "Who are we?," "Where do we come from?," "Which 'we' are we talking about when we talk about 'we'?" and so on did not bother us at the beginning. The Chinese colonized Other, most of whom were refugees from the mainland after Second World War, used to

[1] Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities", ed. Anthony D. King, *Culture, Globalization and the World-system: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 45.

[2] Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity", ibid., p. 32

know where they came from. But soon the people of Hong Kong experienced an identity crisis, before attaining a sense of belonging and before getting used to the contradictory tendencies that surround us, like the one between localism, new nationalism, and ethnic identities, contrasted with international communication highways.[3]

The term "Hong Kong People" surfaced for the first time in local newspapers in 1967. Here I agree with Lawrence Grossberg that traditional and simple binary models of the political struggles of colonizer/colonized, oppressor/oppressed are no longer applicable to questions of personal identity. As former colonies become emergent spatial economies involved in particular forms of internationalization and globalization – which also involve new organizations and orientations – we need to ask why identity is the privileged site of struggle within the broader context of this new spatial economy. Grossberg describes the characteristics of this new economy as extremely variable, having an apparent autonomy and, simultaneously, also having an interdependence that intersects local, regional, national, and international flows, forces and interests.[4]

In Hong Kong, we had a horrifying image of Communist China on the mainland, especially during the Cultural Revolution in 1960s when from time to time we saw bound dead bodies floating down Pearl River Delta to the border of Hong Kong.

The reassertion of nationalist discourses relating to problems of identity was based less on the identification of nation and state than on the assumed identity between nation and ethnicity. Within the space of transition between the local and the global, the notion of globalization was introduced into the scene: a notion that connects the national to the international, and that provides a new transnational context.

The question of "colonial" or "postcolonial" was also introduced. Here I accept Stuart Hall's distinction that colonization indicates direct colonial occupation and rule, and that *postcolonial indicates independence from direct colonial rule.* In postcoloniality, the growth of indigenous capital dominates forms of economic development; there is a neocolonial dependency on the Western capitalist world; and the politics that evolves from the emergence of powerful local elites manage the contradictory effects of under-development.[5]

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[3] See what Catherine Hall said in "Histories Empires and the Postcolonial Moment", Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds.), *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 65.

[4] Lawrence Grossberg, "The Space of Culture, the Power of Space", ibid., pp. 169-170.

[5] Stuart Hall, "When was 'The Postcolonial'? Thinking at the Limit", ibid., pp. 247-248.

Working with this definition, Hong Kong in the 60s had begun to step into the postcolonial and global transcultural context. According to the 1961 census, the population in Hong Kong was more than three million. Over six thousand industrial enterprises had been set up, with about 30 thousand employees. There were also new records set in heavy trading in the stock market. Wages increased, and inflation resulted. During the 60s, colonization made the notion of ethnic absolutism untenable: culture started becoming diasporic.

Colonization operates as a system of rule, power, and exploitation, and also as a system of knowledge and representation, while in the postcoloniality , there involves all forms of transverse, transnational, and transcultural movements that were always already inscribed within the history of colonization. Thus, hybridity, syncretism, multidimensional temporalities, double inscriptions of colonial and metropolitan periods, and forms of transculturation are all assumed in spaces where the so-called decolonization are in effect.[6]

So I agree that the postcolonial is a moment of culture that is preoccupied with questions of identity. It involves a history of the subject's recognition and reworking of memory, which is also simultaneously an active process of forgetting and remembering.[7]

What about postcolonial writings and beliefs? What forms of strategy and problems do they have to consider? It is commonly held that when people are confronted with a particular form of modernity in the form of globalization – that is, confronted with a culture and an economy and a set of histories inscribed elsewhere, and that is so monumental and transmitted with extraordinary speed – local and marginal subjects can only represent and reflect on themselves by their own hidden histories. Thus, the return to the local is often a response, since the space of marginality is also powerful.[8] We have to agree in any case that ethnicity is the necessary space from which people speak, though when threatened by the global forces of postmodernity, this space can sometimes assume the form of fundamentalism.

We can further explain the ultimate return of identity to history by citing Deleuze: "How is it possible to speak without presupposing, without hypothesizing and subjectivizing or subjecting what one speaks about? How is it possible not to speak on the presupposition of a thing, but to say the thing

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[6] Ibid., pp.251-254.

[7] Catherine Hall, "Histories Empires and the Postcolonial Moment", ibid., pp. 66-76.

[8] Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity', *Culture, Globalization and the World-system: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, pp. 33.

itself?"[9] Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that this is not a question of history but of orientations and directions: i.e. a question of a geography of becomings.[10] The complication is that ethnic culture is not a static entity. Ethnic culture is always under immediate narration and reconstruction and is animated by subjective desires and interests. Therefore, as many postcolonial scholars have pointed out, the notion of ethnic identity is always historicized, dynamic, and contradictory. Whoever speaks about ethnic identity tends to speak across boundaries and frontiers and tends to construct an ideal identity according to one's perspective.

A number of postcolonial scholars have also discussed the problems of "troubled homecomings." These problems are related to a suspended space in which the subject inhabits an ambivalent position. First, the scholars said that because there is no original home, the subject is always articulating its absence and writing the impossibility of a return to a homeland. The writing is itself the suspended space of a return to selfhood through the dialogic, which is an interrogative encounter in the subject's language with an internal or external other.

The subject's writing is the territory of loss and memory, and is also the site of an imaginary and unfulfilled journey home. Yet at the same time the subject indicates the desire to inhabit a new home in being and becoming, though the subject is not completely assimilated where it is hoping to go. The subject is alienated and displaced from both a native and adopted land, has an obscured and submerged cry, as it negotiates and articulates in the poetic text the dramatic experience of a precarious condition.[11]

In what follows, I would like to use the work of a brilliant Hong Kong painter to demonstrate the subject's dissonant and conflictual identities, to see how the subject seeks a way of survival by working out a different sense of "home" on the borderline between belonging and exclusion. The painter's work opens up a "distantiating" act of meditation and functions as the poetry of an alienated and displaced subject.[12] If the work is viewed as a response to reality, then this reality should be understood as "becoming," as continuously mutating within and across the space of existence. The reality is defined by the in-between or milieu that it traverses.[13] The new cultural identity involved

[9] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 23.

[10] Lawrence Grossberg, "The Space of Culture, the Power of Space", Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, p. 180.

[11] Demetrio Yocum, "Some Troubled Home Comings", ibid., p. 221.

[12] Ibid., p. 222.

[13] See footnote 10.

is also a construction that draws on new repertories, and we will see if its articulation can be read as both a descriptive and political practice conditioned by particular contexts and effects.

Before we proceed, it is worth mentioning another point Stuart Hall made: colonization is part of an essentially transnational and transcultural global process; it produces a decentered, diasporic, or global rewriting of earlier, nation-centered imperial grand narratives; it supplements and simultaneously displaces the binary of center-periphery; and the global and local reorganize and reshape each other. The theoretical value of postcolonial writing lies precisely in its refusal of the distinction of here and there, then and now, and home and abroad. Hall also said that postcolonial writing represents a response to a genuine need to overcome a crisis of understanding produced by the inability of old categories to account for the world.[14] We should note that identity is always partly a narrative and partly a form of representation. Identity is not something formed outside but is narrated in one's own self. Finally, we should also note Heidegger's saying that the nomadic writing of exile is both the space of alienation and reconnection, where the "far cry" still resounds, and that only our own strenuous hearing could make sense of the sounds.[15]

The Case of Hon Chi-fun: His Art and Aesthetics

Hon Chi-fun was born in Hong Kong in 1922, the first child of a cab driver. He was given a set of books on Chinese painting techniques when he was ten by his father. He thought his father must have noticed his burning desire to get started in painting. Just before the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, Hon learned classic Chinese painting techniques from a school teacher. He and his family relocated to Mainland China during the invasion and he got into farming.

In the prewar period of the 40s, Western painters using Western techniques dominated Hong Kong's painting scene, and Westerners who ran local art organizations outnumbered the Chinese painters using traditional Chinese techniques. This situation existed until numerous Chinese painters immigrated to Hong Kong from southern China during the Japanese invasion. Hon returned to Hong Kong for a short while after the war, but quickly left for Shanghai and got into the import-export trade before moving south to Canton. Then he moved back to Hong Kong. This was the period in his life

[14] Stuart Hall, "When was 'The Postcolonial'? Thinking at the Limit", pp. 247-257.
[15] Demetrio Yocum, "Some Troubled Home Comings", ibid., p. 225.

when he had the most contact with China, but it was also a period of loss and ambiguity. In his autobiography he said about this period:

> "I seemed to have achieved nothing. I had to release my inner self and live out my true nature. I had to liberate, from pure hidden impulses or unintended scribblings, my passion to paint by actually taking up the brush to work."[16]

During that period, Western artistic techniques had dominated the scene in Hong Kong for several years after World War II. Western painting, still life and realism in particular, flourished in galleries and museums. The work of local painters was not of the highest quality at that moment, as they had only minimal exposure to the great masterpieces as well as to intellectual discourses about "foreign" art. A few Chinese painters who had returned from studying Western art abroad taught the only painting classes.

In Hong Kong in 1954, Hon, self-taught, was painting mostly landscapes and portraits in oil. He sketched freely throughout the territory, capturing breathtaking scenes of sunrise and sunset. He became a friend with Luis Chan, a local painter-pioneer, and the two soon accompanied each other on painting tours. Hon was greatly influenced by Chan, who was also self-taught, mostly by his boldly experimental and aesthetic thinking. Chan's oil painting did not practice realism. He described art as "creative imagination" and saw beauty as "the expression of consciousness and emotion."

For Chan creativity was the spontaneous outgrowth of the artist's communication with nature or objects, and one's style is a way to create one's artistic symbols. He had explored schools of modern painting such as Cubism, Expressionism, and Abstractionism, a practice that Hon also picked up, and later favored monotype printing, hard-edged colored-field landscape, and spray-gun painting. The two shared the view that art is the result of the subject's own interior life, and insisted on the absolute freedom of artistic expression. We should note that this freedom includes freedom from the burdens of both cultural heritage and nationalism.

In 1963 Hon met Lu Shoukun, another pioneer-painter, who told him all about the struggles of being a Chinese artist in the British colony. Hon admired Lu and learned much from his views about the Chinese classic masters and theories of ink painting, though not totally identified with all of his ideas. Lu believed that the growing prosperity of Hong Kong, which by the 60s had become a world-city, provided some favorable conditions for his new painting

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[16] Chi-fun Hon, *Space and Passion: The Art of Hon Chi-fun* (Hong Kong: Yan-chi Choi, 2000), p. 18.

movement. The international art community was more interested in a new genre that developed from local cultural innovations than in weak imitations of Western schools. Lu classified modern ideas combined with the Chinese tradition as an "adaptation" that should not be separated from the "root" or foundation.

In traditional Chinese aesthetics the "root" is the spiritual cultivation of the artist, which according to Lu, was based on ancient Confucian principles and teachings such as *Chung Yung* (The Doctrines of the Means) and *Da Xua* (The Teachings), both of which promote self-cultivation and self-discovery in terms of moral reason. By returning to the root, painters could find their own style that would also reflect their personality and ways of life. According to old Confucian teachings, this return to one's root or inner self could also transcend temporal, spatial, and cultural differences. Lu's vision did offer solutions to artists struggling with a crisis of cultural identity in Hong Kong, who were often confused and ungrounded in their hybrid cultural situation. The most important goal, Lu believed, was self-discovery. For only through self-discovery could one form original ideas, and this process should always come before artistic form. To achieve innovation in art, he always insisted, was to seek self-knowledge in one's cultural tradition, a foundation that artists could build on later.

A deeper analysis will reveal a reading connection of Lu's theory of art with Hon's works, though Hon might not like to be claimed an identification of his work with Lu's ideas. In the 50s Hon's oil paintings focused mainly on scenery, and were generalized as "Western." Recognized as Fauvist, his strokes were imbued with a strong personal style, in addition to his use of bold and bright colors. In the 60s, Hon's style went through a great transformation. His colors became more explosive and bordered on an "inertia of the solid" while at the same time began to detach from a "reliance of the solid." Around 1961-1962, Hon's artistic identity began to emerge. He entered the abstract period, using black-and-white to highlight the dramatic contrast between the solid and the void. *Black Crack* (Plate 1, 1963) and *Colloquy* in 1964 were representative of this period. These works had been viewed bearing an air of substance, grandeur, and depth while being abstract, "for the sake of expressing the heart of the Oriental individual" in the words of one critic on a local newspaper.

Critics said that the "Oriental" quality in Hon's works was becoming more prominent. This "Oriental" quality apparently is constituted by a combination of huge swaths made by a big brush and calligraphy made by little brush. Hon worked Chinese calligraphy and poetry into his paintings. Later he even used tracings of stone inscriptions as a substitute for actual calligraphy, and he

Plate 1, *Black Crack, 1963, 140 x 140 cm, oil on canvas*

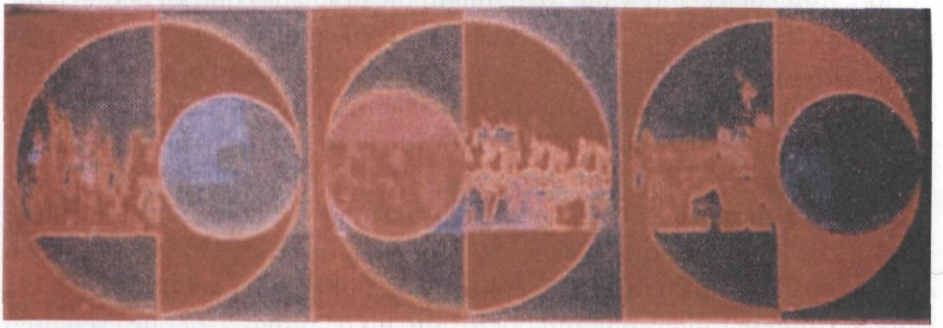

Plate 2, *Bath of Fire, 1968, 132 x 132 x 3 cm, oil, acrylic and serigraphy on canvas*

experimented with collages of mixed media, like metal, sand, and stones. *Desert Walk* represented this latter period. Soon there was *Bath of Fire* (Plate 2, 1968). The work was composed of square and circle patterns delivered predominantly in strong contrasting red and green, silk-screened with words and with an image of a recent photo of the artist. Critics described it as a fiery autobiography of the artist. From that point on, Hon began to venture into new high-tech materials like acrylic paints.

After finishing *Bath of Fire* in 1968, Hon traveled to Europe and the United States. When he got back to Hong Kong, he simplified his work considerably. His paintings were almost without line, shape, form, or even color: as examples, *Karma Focus* (1971) or *The Way of Lotus* (Plate 3, 1974). For these paintings, Hon obviously employed – instead of the brush – more modern materials, like a spray gun. The spaces he illustrated were neither defined nor abstract, but were somewhat serene, with a detached aura and harmony. Critics said that in the 70s and 80s, Hon rejected the use of forms. He reduced objective images to their purest forms, to the circle, for instance. His personal style expressed his interior world as well as his feeling and understanding of nature and the universe.

Plate 3, *The Way of Lotus 1974, 132 x 132 cm, acrylic on canvas*

Whenever Hon Chi-fun's early works are discussed, they are related to the concepts of the modern and the "Oriental." Did his transition from his early "Western" painting of scenery to the abstraction of his circles in the 60s really reflect the so-called "modernity" of the 60s? Shortly after, he incorporated Buddhist scriptures and Chinese poetry into his paintings likes *Mountain Faith* (1971). Do the concepts of the modern and the "Oriental" divide Hon's works into two categories? Can these two concepts be melded grounding on a deeper understanding of a unitary base? Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that this is not a question of history but of orientations and directions: this is a question of a geography of becomings. What could these concepts disclose about the nature of postcolonial expression?

At some point in the 60s when Hon was riding the hightide of modernity, he said that the time of abstract expression in painting was over: "Painting these days is enjoying its pure, orderly and rational form; it no longer emphasizes the individual's spiritual world," he said in 1965. At that time, he longed for the construction of a new "absolute" identity, and he believed that to be modern is to be "perfect" in the scientific era. However, by purity, order, reason, and perfection, he was referring mainly to the spectrum of engravings. Hon rejected his favorite impressionism and zealously tried out all kinds of brand-new images. But he has never been without his personal view. Order and precision, according to him, are the result of personal longing, total commitment, and a reordering of chaos. He said that he experienced an unbearable sensation when he was producing those brand-new images, as he disclosed in an interview that at that time he was emotionally involved with a white woman from the United Kingdom, while still tied to a Chinese Marriage. Under traditional constraints and struggles, the sensation was what set in motion his assault on the limits of reality and his quest for a new world.

In retrospect, Hon's tireless persistence can be interpreted as an artist's venture into the forbidden zone in order to fulfill a desire for rebirth. The attempt to meld what is defined and abstract, what is substance and spirit, could be seen as reflecting the yearning of the lonely artist's soul. So that Hon's artistic endeavors and his emotional upheavals are likewise two sides of the same coin.

In his autobiography reflecting his life of the decade, Hon said:

> "Along my journey of exploration, I somehow came across an unbearable sensation. Such sensations sparked off my impulse and my strong resistance against the constraint of reality. Constraints and resistance were interactive and mutually stimulating. I was driven to plunge into new horizons of creativity, and being encouraged to be even more so by friends involved in new thoughts and new art movements. We talked

about Existentialism, the East and the West and the awakening of the modern age. The upsurge of thinking in my mind ignited my strong passion to reveal all in my heart. Those burning desires never ceased to stimulate my creativity, which all came through in my works, be they landscapes or experimental paintings, of realism or abstractionism. While I strove to get away from the past, my sub-consciousness was still considerably bound by tradition. My work was rather the motion of the still, and the stillness of those in motion – a true revelation of my inner self. Excessively occupied by such passion, I screamed alone, only faintly echoed by the darkness around me."[17]

What is modern? When Hon was asked about his view of what was modern, he maintained that what was modern was a question of "being" and "to be". Creativity at that period was viewed as self-therapy, helping artists to seek alternative satisfaction and to survive in a time of trouble. Not that terribly important to Hon at that time, were prevalent trends in the West, like Abstract Expressionism, Op Art, Photo-Realism, and so on. The precision in his works was not meant to ape the modern trend. Hon said *to be modern was simply to "live to the fullest,"* and that in the context of the production of art, "living to the fullest" was the artist's existential choice.

In his seminal *Bath of Fire* of 1968, Hon had included the text: "I try to calm myself down, spirit in motion, hands in motion, looking up at the finite body with an infinite, me anxiously painfully undividedly persistently offering heaps of hope and burning faith." Only the artist himself knew exactly what the terms anxiety, pain, hope, and fire in this text meant according to his own experience. However objective one tried to be, reality would always be simply the point of departure – instead of the result – of the production of art.

Some critics had long been able to point out the explosive strain and spontaneity in Hon's works. Critics said that his desire for change by the means of the control of reason – expressed by his use of black color in an early work *Black Crack* – was prompted by a powerful urge that he had suppressed. Critics thought that Hon's suppression – and outburst – of inner urgings drove him to pour out his entire personality and life experiences onto the canvas. What kind of suppression might that be? According to Choi Yan-chi, Hon's present wife, it might be the desire to break through the old world's value system into the new, which could be another interpretation of the meaning of the modern. For Hon, being modern is a detachment. Take as an example his use, since the 60s, of the circle, which is a symbol of purity and the ideal. With a perfect understanding of its features, close observation of its texture,

[17] Ibid., p. 20.

and accompanied by continual practice and refinement, Hon made the circle the reference point for absolute expression. It seems more appropriate to call his experience of the circle "an adventure of the heart." In his autobiography, here is what he said about his use of circles:

> "Circles add for me a yet more spacious fourth dimension, occupying almost the entire painting while giving the work a symbol of existence. The circle may be you, or me or be the him or her, other than us. Overshadowing the boundless earth, the circle was like a hanging cloud– immersing into infinity. I was determined to crystallize my emotions, and the instinctive enlightenment and everlasting sentiments in my paintings."[18]

To many critics and viewers, the superimposing forms and changing colors of the circle express Hon's feelings and understanding about nature and the universe. Rather, I would interpret his use of the circle as an idealized projection of his inner life. We can see this when we track the trajectory his early works *Flower Enigma* (1968), *E is the name* (1971), *Chasm Forever* (1971), to his later *White Encounter* (1987), and *Here and Beyond* (1985), which are closer to humankind in their expression of longing, interaction, control, and regret. We can see through this tracking that the mysterious circle carried with it not salvation of a secular religion, but the artist's inner peace after emotional explosion and unrest.

The circle in Hon's works seems to be poised on a high level, looking back in contemplation at the turmoil of life, sustaining the painter's subjective intent, artistically and existentially. Confronted and confused by – and lost in – another world on his return from abroad, the painter had an urgent need for reconstruction, simplification, and order in both his life and his work. And the infinite possibilities of the circle provided an appropriately perfect solution.

When Hon first drew the circle, he incorporated the Chinese character of "I" into more than ten of his works; within, without, above, below, in front of and behind the circle, named them as *My Profiles* (Plate 4, 1969) The Chinese "I" became integrated into the structure and rhythm of his works. How the subject faces up to his current existence best illustrates Hon' s interpretation of what was modern. He said:

> "In the beginning, there's got to be 'me'. With 'I' begets the group and the world. The issue is whether I can let go, if yes, there is progress, if no, I am at least true to myself. The circle is me; my form of existence,

[18] Ibid., pp. 22-23.

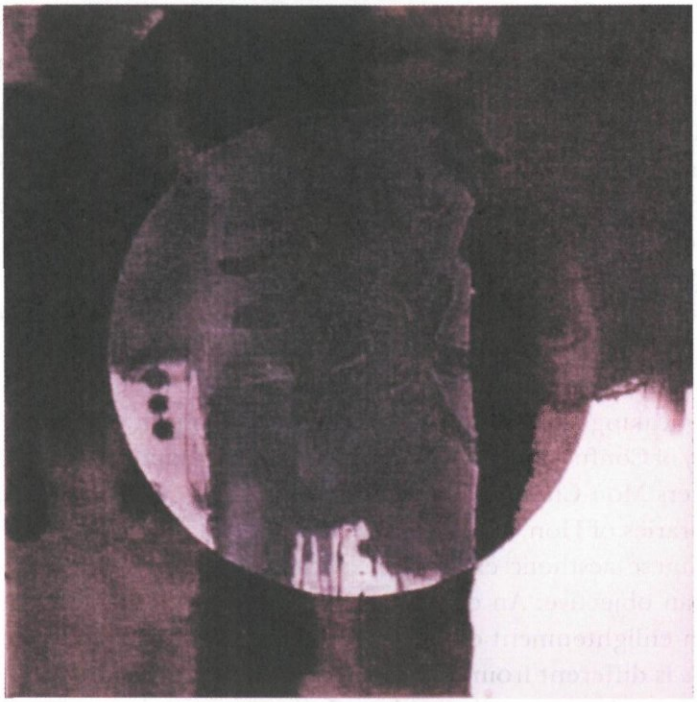

Plate 4, *My Profiles 1969, 40 x 40 cm, acrylic, serigraph, oil and paper on canvas*

the thing I worship. It embodies the contemporary environment and space. It is the perfection I'm after."[19]

In spite of Hon's insistence that his work is beyond what people meant by the abstract in art history, a lot of people still associate his work with Abstract Expressionism and consider it as the backbone of his "modernity." If the starting point of the abstract is what is an object's true feature and form, then Hon's work had been abstract for a while before being transformed into a more personal world. That is to say, a world endowed with deeper meaning and points toward a freedom that supercedes everyday existence. The painter knew well the limitation of desire. Yet he found it impossible to find a sense of peace in his environment, and this was why he longed for purification.

But abstraction on a broader sense may also carry a wider meaning than its convention in art history, such as "leading to the emergence of a stable, orderly, and understandable form," "transforming time into space in order to keep time still," "leading to the formation of a new perfect order," and "the

[19] Ibid., p. 23.

exercise of strict contemplation to control feelings of subjective consciousness." The meaning of abstraction, then, in Hon's works, is not the disclosure of the true nature of the object, but identification with the artist's ideal.

Besides the modern, people used to discuss the quality of the Oriental in Hon's works. They see the value of Hon's art in his exposure of the "Oriental heart." The following are some common main features: (1) Ink-wash effect and Chinese calligraphy;[20] (2) Inclusion of ancient Chinese objects;[21] (3) Oriental philosophy and words.[22] But the one important point about being Oriental is that its implicit expression cannot be achieved in a contrived manner. The above list is derived mainly from the perspective of form.

The nature of being "Oriental" should be a deeply cultural concept of thought. Speaking about aesthetic judgment in terms of traditional Chinese philosophy of Confucianism and Taoism, the interpretations of Neo-Confucian philosophers Mou Chung-san and Tang Jun-I, both senior and respectable contemporaries of Hon, are the most elaborate.

In Chinese aesthetic experience, Mou said there is not necessarily an object or an objective: An objective appearance would disclose itself once there is an enlightenment of the subjective heart about what one wants to know. This is different from objective presentation as defined by "cognitive relationship" in Western epistemology. It is not a question of "presentation" but one of "realization" originating from the heart. Mou said that this realization comes about when the heart is fully illuminated. The "enlightenment" and "illumination" refer to a kind of "Eureka" on a spiritual level. Tang further believed in a kind of "entirety perception" in the interaction between heart and object, whether it is objective or constructive. The subjective heart slowly discards this "perception" and objectifies its content. Selection by the heart (artist subject) would ensue and then evaluative judgment follows.

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[20] Ink-wash is supposedly in Hon's canvasses. There we find sweeping swaths of big brush displaying the ink in both dark and light shades and also the incorporation of Chinese calligraphy of poetry. The integration is perfectly harmonious, carrying with it a slight literary taste, and stands as an exploration of emptiness and darkness. Strokes are implicit and filled with Chinese imaginary. The concept of blankness is well used. In the balance between in and out, blankness introduces the shift of space.

[21] Ancient Chinese objects like carved stones of the North-Wei dynasty; metal prints and rubbings of stone inscription are placed onto the canvas. Special care is devoted to the treatment of space, and the displacement between the solid and the void.

[22] Hon's fondness for Oriental philosophy and Buddhist scriptures is more a fulfillment of the heart than mere garnishment. He once said the visual form and display of the sutra words like "sumi-e", "stream of forgetfulness" carry with them special beauty; but he nonetheless is more concerned about their symbolic implication, as spiritual tool of communication to ease the troubled mind.

Both selection and judgment are based on the criteria of the life activities and spiritual interest of the subjective self, depending largely on one's aspired form.

Generally speaking, aesthetic judgment refers to the initial stage of contact between heart and object. Western aesthetics divides the cognitive stage into three: intuition, perception, and imagination. This is a conclusion based on the assumed relationship between the subjective according to Western epistemology. On the other hand, Chinese aesthetic judgment focuses mainly on the heart's drive. The purer the heart's activities are (moral entity as in Confucianism), the more refined the object becomes. The sentiment of aesthetic judgment develops under the principle and process of "human nature over feeling." The art of creation reflects the spontaneous response from the heart, which is then objectified and externalized to become an object of art. Artistic creation is an accomplishment achieved in the unified and indivisible spirit between subject and object, reflecting the spiritual and emotional form of the subject's aspired life. This is also the truth about the unity of solid and void, spirit and form in Chinese painting. The following citation from Tang on Chinese art spirit best reminds me of Hon's painting. The citation also helps me to understand Hon's comments on his own work as being neither expressive nor abstract.

> "There is no talking of reality, as it is without relative objective existence. To be expressive, there has to be a subject to express. All kinds of Chinese art have a common point, not in the expression of objective beauty or calling from god, but to express the temperament and perspective of the individual."

The subject "I," not simply a pouring out of personal emotional response, releases such an expression after the restraint of selection and evaluative judgment. After studying the precise and insightful related theories by Tang and Mou, one finds in Hon Chi-fun's circle an almost perfect illustration of these theories. Just as some critics have said, after years of interpretation and study, the circle to Hon has been transformed into a "suspenseful tug-of-war" between one's abstract thinking and spiritual yearning, embodying its own implication of thought and philosophy, including the basic and ultimate form of life, the path of the universe, and so on.

The Revelation of Hon's Case as It Relates to National, International, Transnational, and Transcultural

We assume that we need an identity to cope with a world that is so confusing. We want to have some stable points of reference, some still points in a turning world.[23] We assume all this especially in a colony like Hong Kong that is entering the new international division of labor and international capitalism girded by the transnational corporation and production. The subject in this situation is situated in the context of cultural fragmentation, multiculturalism, and the re-articulation of indigenous cultures. The waning of boundaries makes identity the site of conflict.

As critics and theorists of colonialism have pointed out, the logic of identity is very significant in a whole range of political, theoretical, and conceptual discourses. Identity is also an existential reality related to the subject's conceptions of the self; in another words, identity seems to assume the notion of a true self, a sort of guarantee of authenticity concealed behind the various masks of the fictional selves that we present to the world. The question is whether we believe in a transcendental form of the self that is drawn into – and is gradually transformed by – the contingent upheavals, vicissitudes, and ruptures of history. It is also assumed that identity is always in the process of transformations and constructions through human ambivalence and desires, and is therefore never completed and finished.[24] Nothing – be it intention, perception, experience, or practice or event – ever guarantees the outcome of identity or of history.

How about the form of ethnicity that Lu had mentioned? It is assumed that ethnicity assures the crucial roles that history, language, and culture will play in the construction of subjectivity and identity. However, as the colonial subject in his struggles moves forward and assumes new forms, it does to some degree displace, reorganize, and reposition different cultural strategies in relation to one another.[25]

The interpretation is that there is not a closed and limited construction of a pure authentic sign, but an endless and excessive transformation of subject – positions possible within the hybridized.[26] Hon, as he himself said in his

[23] Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity", *Culture, Globalization and the World-system: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, p. 22.

[24] Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities", ibid., pp. 42-49.

[25] Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities", Bill Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (eds.), *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 223-227.

[26] Griffiths Gareth, "The Myth of Authenticity", Ibid., p. 241.

autobiography, has a strong emotional and tragic sense of life, which, when manifested in his work, is wholly subsumed within the constraints of a formal painterly unity and aesthetic function. The code of pictorial representation and cultural conventions in Hon's works had been mange of the East and the West, both of which seem to have equal impact on his artistic and personal life. He used brushes as well as spray-guns, creating bold strokes with the former on top of the perfect order produced by the latter.

I agree with Paul Crowther that the artist's own intentions, feelings, and attitudes, instead of merely being translated into painting, are not actually located in some opaque zone of subjectivity "behind' the medium, but rather embodied and mediated within articulated semantics. Crowther said that painting is a particular way of viewing the world, and that aesthetic experience fuels aesthetic form in a way that generates empathic responses, reintegrates the individual with the lifeworld.[27]

Hon's works show the same sensibility in the sense that they came from a subjective space that had gone through its own struggles of displacement and reposition, and to some degree had subverted conventional forms of representation, and also had followed an irresistible desire to represent profound spirituality, religion, and tenderness.[28] Though when Hon mentioned his struggles with romantic relationships, his experience of modern Western culture and diasporic loneliness, he talked about them as if they were private events, yet they were all events within the context of a colonial space; and he carried this psychic state with him wherever he traveled.

Hon's art, as he explained, is an ethical and religious elevation from emotional turmoil. His work's modern spirit lives on in the experience of rebelling against all that is normative and in the rejection of all that no longer speaks to existence. His work also lives on in the principle of unbridled self-realization, in the demand for authentic self-experience, and in the subjectivism of a hyper-stimulated sensitivity. His work is also against the conventions and values of an everyday life, which has become rationalized under the pressures of colonial economic and administrative imperatives.

Truth, rightness, authenticity, and beauty all inform Hon's form of taste. Here he reminds us of what Habermas said: "The autonomy of the aesthetic sphere could become a deliberate project: the talented artist could lend authentic expression to those experiences he had in encountering his own

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[27] Paul Crowther, *Critical Aesthetics and Postmodernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 108-112.

[28] Ibid., pp. 184-5.

de-centered subjectivity, detached from the constraints of routinized cognition and every day action."[29]

Hon's paintings, analyzed above as having a deeper investment of "Orientalism," also reveal a spiritual sense of Chinese aesthetics: that is, manifesting a "history" of the colonized past. There seems to be an attempt to develop a notion of self and identity that links difference to the insistence of speaking in many voices, and to fix a notion of identity that is shifting and multiple. We can also see in Hon's art an act of resistance and self-transformation, a voice of becoming a subject in history rather than being an object. Inside his paintings are inseparable personal stories, issues of survival and resistance, of a modernized subject liberating himself from conservative norms via artistic sublimation, but utilizing colonial privileges and traditional aesthetic beliefs at the same time.

Till now, we may have seen enough ambiguities in Hon's art, but as Larry Grossberg pointed out, it is true that after all, it is no longer a question of globality (as homelessness) and locality (as the identification of place and identity), national and international or transnational and transcultural, but of the various ways people are attached themselves affectively into the world.[30]

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[29] Jürgen, Habermas "Modernity versus Postmodernity", eds. Natoli, Joseph and Linda Hutcheon, *A Postmodern Reader* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 99.

[30] See note 4, p. 185.

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ALTERED LANDSCAPES: A COMPARISON BETWEEN WORKS BY J. H. PIERNEEF AND JOHN CLARKE

ESTELLE A. MARÉ AND N. J. COETZEE

All the artifacts of human culture, more especially works of art, stand in need of interpretation. Since there are many critical approaches available to the art historian it is imperative that he or she pauses at the outset of any hermeneutic venture to meditate upon the essence of the work of art, which should not be understood as its sole meaning but as a core of possible meanings which can be inferred from it.

When interpreting an work of art the art, historian is tempted to exploit it as an object which will yield meaning if subjected to analysis. So it is appropriate that some common misconceptions concerning art should be dealt with at the outset:

Firstly, that art is a closed system which finds its meaning within itself. A.denotative theory of meaning should be introduced as a bulwark against a formalist or purely aesthetic approach. The reason for this assertion is that a denotative theory of meaning "grants art a referential function and forbids us to say with the formalists that art refers only to itself" (Dufrenne 1983: 209).

Secondly, that a work of art is representational. Truth in art is not a correspondence; therefore, representation should not be considered the essence of art. For example, the meaning of Vincent van Gogh's painting of peasant shoes,[1] to which Heidegger (1950) refers in his discussion of the origin of the work of art, cannot be interpreted adequately in terms of a mimetic relation between the shoes and the image. Therefore Heidegger discusses the shoes depicted as denotive of the woman to whom they belonged and situates them in her life world.

Thirdly, there is the view that a work of art is an object. Turning a work of art into a mere object reduces it to something one can sell or otherwise manipulate by subjecting it to theoretical investigation, analysis and interpretation form a biased point of view, which may falsify its meaning. We concur with Friedrich Schiller's insight that "the world which is subject to the

scientific method of understanding is a soulless world" (Von der Luft 1984: 267). Thus it may happen that works of art which have their source in the cultural sphere of a particular historical people at a particular time, such as Pierneef's landscapes and Clarke's place images, lose their vitality when they are removed from their context and placed in a museum or gallery in order to be optimally viewed as art objects.

Stated differently, a work of art can be said to be created by an artist at a specific time and place, and an interpretation can be "correct" only if the perception of the interpreter is "direct", not influenced by other preconceptions, and provided that the work of art is not reduced to an object which can be subjected to manipulation which, of necessity, would violate its integrity and alter its intended meaning.

According to Megill (1985: 156), Heidegger's "phenomenological preoccupation" is concerned "with letting things show themselves as they actually are". This is especially true of a work of art. Heidegger called the "correct" interpretation of Being (*Dasein),* hermeneutics. This method of deriving meaning is actually a combination of phenomenology and hermeneutics (Richardson 1963: 631). Heidegger furthermore connects art to ontology since all things, among them a work of art, aspire to be themselves. The reality of the work of art is to be itself, bound only to its origin.[2] About this origin he reasoned as follows: "The origin of the work of art – that is the origin of both the creators and the preservers, which is to say of a people's historical existence – is art" (1977: 187). If art is created in a specific place and at a specific time, we encounter a normative choice of interpretation which excludes talk about meaning on the basis of a cultural field in general.

To define art is impossible. However, by following Heidegger one arrives at the insight that a work of art creates "a world". If this world comes into being by an openness opened up by the work of art itself, the more simply it snatches us away from the realm of the ordinary. In this sense the cultural field of the work of art comes into a mimetic relationship with its specific origin.

In the following discussion it is our aim to present the worlds created by two artists who presented the South African landscape in ways that reveal the expectations of two different generations of viewers. The psychological impact of the two sets of place images can only be explained in the context of a

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[1] Vincent van Gogh (1853-90), *Old shoes,* Vincent van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

[2] "Das Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" in *Holzwege* (1950). This essay has been translated in various editions of Heidegger's work in English as "The origin of the work of art". See Heidegger (1971).

country in which political strife has to a large extent centred on the ownership of land, the "land" referring to the country as such, as a geographical and political unity.

J. H. Pierneef's altered landscapes

In the "Foreword" to Nicholaas J. Coetzee's catalogue of the so called "Station Panels" by J. H. Pierneef, entitled *Pierneef, land and landscape*, C. M. Till, the Director of Culture for the City of Johannesburg writes: "Public patronage of the arts has not been a major part of South Africa's cultural life and the commissioning of the Station Panels over 60 years ago was an event which has shown the benefit of such action in furthering and supporting the visual arts" (Coetzee 1992: iv). These panels are at present housed and conserved in the Johannesburg Art Gallery, a necessity which detracts from their meaning in their original setting in the Johannesburg station building. What was achieved by the panoramic and monumental landscape panels in the largest South African station building can only be answered when these representations of landscape and land are placed in the South African context of almost seventy years ago.

Who was Pierneef? Why did he receive the commission and what did he actually portray in the Station Panels?

Jacob Hendrik Pierneef was born in Pretoria in 1886. His parents were Dutch and during the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) when the British forces took Pretoria in June 1900, his family chose to return to the Netherlands. There Pierneef came to the realization that he wanted to be an artist and received some training in Rotterdam. After his return to the Transvaal Colony Pierneef received lessons in oil painting from established European-trained artists. He worked in the State Library and taught art, visited the Netherlands again in 1925 and in all probability became acquainted with the new movements in European art there. On the other hand it is notable that Pierneef, who as a consummate Western artist had an influence on cultured people, both English and Afrikaans, also showed an interest in indigenous art, especially Bushmen art. Coetzee (1992: 2) is of the opinion that Pierneef and most Afrikaners identified rather with Africa than with England, even though this kind of identification was still relatively undefined, widely inclusive and ideologically unfocussed. It is ironic that Pierneef, who had lectured on the art of the Bushman and the "Black" man, sometimes in the most appreciative and complementary terms, should turn out to be one of the main advocates of an exclusionary "White", indigenous art.

In the interpretation of the Station Panels we follow an alternative or revisionist way of looking at Pierneef's landscape painting. His Johannesburg Station Panels constitute the largest single landscape commission in the history of South Africa and therefore merit further research. Pierneef's Dutch connections, personal family background and nationality enabled him (or perhaps compelled him inevitably) to exploit the northern European tradition of landscape painting. At the height of his career Pierneef lent his prestige to the cultural cause of the Afrikaner whose struggle for cultural emancipation from the British empire had intensified by 1935. By that time the polarization of Afrikaans and English speaking South Africans had also increased greatly.

The government of the Union of South Africa had by 1927 decided to provide Johannesburg, a rapidly expanding city and the centre of the world's largest gold-producing industry, with a railway station which rose to considerable importance in the architectural history of that city. The commission for the Station Panels to decorate the main concourse on a monumental scale was awarded to Pierneef by the South African Railways and Harbours Commission in July 1929. The reception of the finished work, unveiled on 31 May 1934, was favourable.

Pierneef finished the twenty-eight main panels described in terms of the commission as depictions of "historical places" or "natural scenery". The setting of the panels necessitated some geometrical analysis because of semi-circular architectural form of the station concourses. The fact that the painter could not work from nature necessitated *in situ* sketches. However, Pierneef designed his panels in such a way that the viewer, acquainted with the South African landscape, will realise that he imposed order to make the panels in their totality expressive of a world-view largely determined by culture and ideology.

An analysis of the compositions of the panels reveals an underlying working design, for example the *Louis Trichardt* panel (figure 1) shows the point of the church spire coinciding with the exact centre of the composition and some of the clouds describe concentric circles intersecting the diagonals around that point. We have numerous sketches clearly showing that Pierneef planned, calculated, divided and balanced the pictorial elements according to geometric forms. One can repeatedly recognize his use of symmetrical compositional features such as the arch as part of a circle, the sectioning of the surface horizontally and the use of triangles on either side of an imaginary line. This use of geometric forms situates Pierneef in a western tradition of mural painting, but they often seem contrived, for example the regularity of the circle. When applied to representational painting most geometric forms transform and stylize natural forms. But, in combining painting and

architecture, as in Pierneef's commission, it was desirable that the paintings support the station architecture in its monumentality.

It should be repeated that, besides a merely technical artistic motivation, the clear compositional schemes of Pierneef's panels indicate a striving to impose order by bringing landscape under the control of architecture. Furthermore, they represent a desire to structure the landscape, to render nature into culture, physically and spiritually, and to transform the wilderness into a collective mental vision. Landscape at its most fundamental level deals inescapably with man's relationship with the world and with man in the world. In Pierneef's world-making, his stylizations indicate a culturally determined set of relations.

In the case of the Station Panels it is most rewarding to engage the content of this culturally determined set of relations that Pierneef presented to innocent viewers who were embarking or disembarking from their travels, during which they most probably saw the real world of nature, of which the panels are representations. I refer to the previous generation viewers of the panels as "innocent" because they uncritically accepted a mimetic relation between art and reality, and were captivated by the exotic romance of the atmosphere that was created by the scenes.

If landscape can reveal the identity of a historic people, what did Pierneef reveal?

His pleas in the thirties for the founding of an indigenous Afrikaans art had an exclusivist undertone, given that Bushman rock art is indigenous in any case. He furthermore cultivated his own public image as an interpreter of the African landscape. The main features of his art, which reveal the influence of the Hague School, are the simplification of forms, the building up of the pictorial surface in planes and the dulling and paling of colours. These features he combined with his theory of art, which was rooted in a combined sense of religious calling and of calling as an artist of the people. The people had to be taught "that art is also a form of religion" (Coetzee 1992: 20). Pierneef believed that he was a "mood" painter; he specifically wanted to evoke an atmosphere that expressed the essence of African landscape. Seen in this combined religious and cultural sense, the meticulously structured and aestheticized landscapes of Pierneef are a response to and, indeed, a concrete expression of deep-seated Afrikaner cultural convictions and political aspirations. Pierneef's identification with Afrikaner nationalism occurred gradually and coincided with his search for artistic identity. Landscape was ideally suited to convey the Afrikaner's sense of being mystically linked to the land. Afrikaners derive their historical being and identity from this

relationship; they are products of the land, farmers at heart. The inference is that the Afrikaners were destined to settle and to take possession of the land. Indeed, one of the primary aims of Afrikaner nationalism was to confirm the Afrikaners' claim to the land, which was already established by the time that Pierneef embarked on the Station Panels. In executing those panels he responded to nationalistic ideas and gave the Afrikaners a pictorial evocation of what they wanted to believe of the land and of themselves: an elevated expression of the greatness of the land which is theirs. In a pantheistic way the artist emptied the landscapes of detail and also of people. They became landscapes of the sublime, but also relate to the politics of expansion, of conquest and grandeur. Pierneef painted a low horizon line with a vast sky, creating striking vistas in which conditions on the ground are eliminated. In this respect it needs to be pointed out that in the 1930s both black and white farmers were poverty-stricken and sporadic labour unrest occurred. Coetzee (1992: 27) argues that: "Pierneef's landscapes are clearly an outsider's view of the land, a view of the land that was de-historicized, de-humanized, drained of compassion. It is a view that is at the same time informed by a sterile religious mysticism." He concludes (1992: 3): "The sense of form and pictorial organization is what appealed to the viewer of the Pierneef landscapes. The reasons are ideological and historical. ... [L]andscape gives the viewer the illusion of control, of the imposition of order on the chaotic world outside and therefore of the domination of the world outside."

The station commission fulfilled an important advertising function for the South African Railways as the responsible authority for tourism. Pierneef's panels gave the Railways much more than the needed publicity material. These panels were painted in an important time for Afrikaner nationalism. I may also add that white English settlers also came to view Pierneef's landscape panels through his eyes. However, in his landscapes Pierneef mainly addressed the Afrikaners' nostalgia for the land, and helped legitimise their exclusive claim to South Africa.[3] He achieved this mainly by presenting his work in terms of the notion of art as religion, thereby exploiting the strong Calvinist basis in Afrikaner nationalism. Far from being innocent and purely aesthetic, Pierneef's landscapes are in fact powerfully ideological. He not only exploited the conventions of European landscape painting for purely artistic purposes, but also transformed those conventions to suit Afrikaner ideology. Pierneef's

[3] It is a bit too strong to say that the Afrikaners were imperialists like the British empire builders. Only Cecil John Rhodes expressed the "Cape to Cairo" ambition, and Afrikaner aspirations seem rather pale in comparison with the British exploits in South Africa.

influence as a self-appointed indoctrinator of the masses moving through the station concourse, far exceeded his artistic influence.

Either one understands them to be "propaganda" as the South African Railways who commissioned them required, or they can be appreciated as a romanticized version of a country most white South Africans feel nostalgic about. After this foregone conclusion, I will deal with a selection of panels individually.[4] The panels denote a country that South Africans can never retrieve, perhaps they denote a country which never existed: they unequivocally represent a sentiment that had no basis in fact.

The panel done of the town of Louis Trichardt (figure 1) was preceded by preparatory sketches showing a geometrical design. This panel may be one of the first painted in the series since in the left foreground the surface is left unresolved. Louis Trichard is a historical town, named after one of the Voortrekker leaders who camped in the vicinity in 1836-37. It was linked to the South African railway network in 1912. We know that the settlement of whites in this area was followed by skirmishes with the local black people and that the village was destroyed by the blacks during the second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). It was subsequently rebuilt and had not yet reached municipal status when Pierneef painted it.

Pierneef's placing of the church at the centre of the panel is in keeping with the building having a social and cultural significance far exceeding its physical size, thereby emphasizing its symbolic meaning rather than its pictorial function. *Louis Trichardt* depicts a town situated to the far north, most probably thought of, at the time, as the closest to the "dark" northern regions of the African continent. The prominence of the church possibly represents the civilizing mission of the whites by means of Christianity.

From the northernmost town to the southernmost, Cape Town, we have a view of Table Mountain (figure 2). By dropping away the middle distance a great sense of distance is created and by framing the view with trees the impact of the mountain is increased. While *Table Mountain* dramatizes the grandeur of a specific mountain, the panel depicting the Drakensberg (figure 3) has no specific place as a visual focus. It is a generic depiction of the Drakensberg,

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[4] Data of Pierneef's landscapes:
Figure 1: *Louis Trichardt,* oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 140x149 cm
Figure 2: *View of Table Mountain,* oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 140x148 cm
Figure 3: *View of the Drakensberg,* oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 141x127 cm
Figure 4: *Premier Mine,* oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 141x127 cm
Figure 5: *Rand Gold Mine,* oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 141x127 cm
Figure 6: *Graaff-Reinet,* oil on canvas pasted on blockboard panel, 140x149 cm

Figure 1: J. H. Pierneef, *The town of Louis Trichardt* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)

Figure 2: J. H. Pierneef, *View of Table Mountain* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)

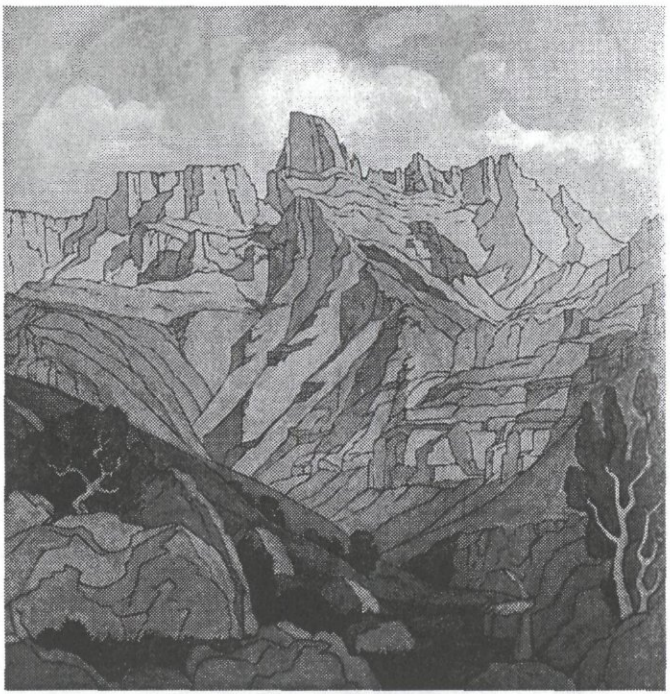

Figure 3: J. H. Pierneef, *View of the Drakensberg* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)

one of the scenic mountain ranges in southern Africa. To the Afrikaner the Drakensberg is a reminder the barriers they had to cross during the Great Trek in 1838 in search of the promised land, away from British domination in the Cape.

Premier Mine (figure 4) and *Rand Gold Mine* (figure 5) are companion pieces. The importance of diamonds and gold as symbols of South Africa's mineral wealth is what Pierneef invokes in the panels. I will deal only with the diamond mine panel.

On 26 January 1905 the world's largest diamond was discovered at the Premier site, near Cullinan, north-east of Pretoria. Pierneef depicts the vast excavation pit. It is this enormous scar in the face of the earth, reputed to be the biggest single pit at the time, that Pierneef chose to depict. Diamonds were at that time one of the main exports of the Union and the Cullinan diamond was used in the crown of the British monarch. Ironically the Railways did not make any attempt to promote this rather sleepy town and as a result it has very little historical significance to merit inclusion in the Panels. Totally dominated by the presence of the mine, one may ask why Pierneef included it. The only reason is the fame of the Cullinan diamond.[5]

[5] Most probably there was little prestige in the Cullinan diamond for Afrikaners since the diamond industry was controlled by British interests.

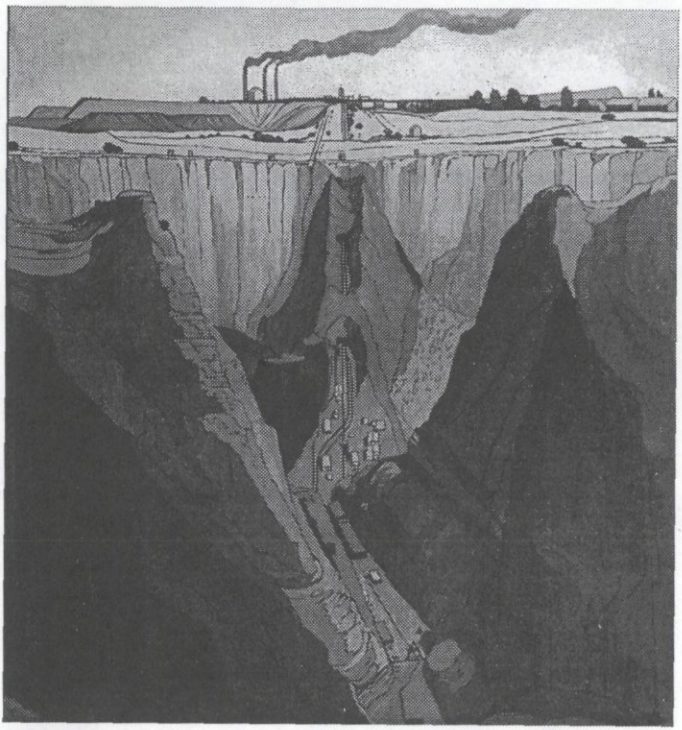

Figure 4: J. H. Pierneef, *Premier Mine* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)

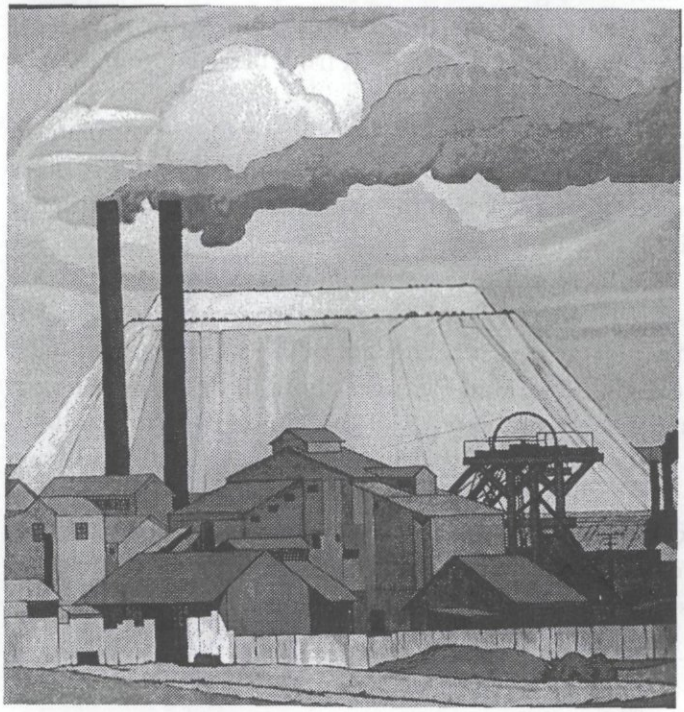

Figure 5 J. H. Pierneef, *Rand Gold Mine* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)

Graaff-Reinet (figure 6) is the depiction of an old and historic town, at least by South African standards, which was granted municipal status in 1845. It is situated in the Karoo, an arid and stony region with dramatic landscapes. Pierneef chose to paint the so-called Valley of Desolation, a well-known landmark and scenic spot a few kilometres west of the town. The panel *Graaff-Reinet* shows a group of basaltic pillars which in reality rise to a height of 120 metres. The scene is executed in subtle tones of brown; it is obviously designed, composed, structured and ordered to create an awesome effect of purposeless natural architecture. The ordered arch of the sky fitting the panel into an architectural form turns the representation into a strange place which vitiates any human interest that it may have.

This group of stone pillars can be used as a thematic link with John Clarke's representation of rural places, but there is also a strong contrast in expression and the two artists' ideological interest in the features of the land.

Figure 6: J. H. Pierneef, *Graaff-Reinet* (Photograph copyright J. N. Coetzee)

John Clarke's altered landscapes

John Clarke focuses on the ordinary in his artistic endeavour. More specifically, in the two works under consideration, the etchings entitled *Stockade I* (figure 7) and *Stockade II* (figure 8),[6] the depicted stones and stockades refer to ordinary and commonplace phenomena in rural areas where traditional Africans dwell. Therefore, Heidegger's (1971: 46-7) description of stones seems to be a relevant link between his theory of art and Clarke's sensitivity to places marked by stones: "A stone presses downwards and manifests its heaviness. But ... this heaviness ... denies to us any penetration into it. If we attempt such a penetration by breaking open the rock, it still does not display in its fragments anything inward that has been disclosed. The stone has instantly withdrawn again into the same dull pressure and bulk of its fragments."

Since Clarke's insistence on the representation of concrete things presenting elements of the earth – such as stones – is so strong, it seems appropriate to inquire into the meaning of the "subject matter" of his works. It may be postulated that he is dealing with the meaning of "earth", which produces rocks and trees and is the habitat of humans. "Earth" is the natural place disclosed by historical *habitat* which merits analysis as the key to the understanding of Clarke's works.

The viewer senses that Clarke himself, and all people, at least try, but do not necessarily succeed, in relating positively to the earth. In the two *Stockade* etchings this relationship is expressed by means of the representation of arranged and decorated stones and similarly spotted branches or tree stumps as elements of human-made environments – even though they are void of any visible human presence. In these works the world of art opens up through a representation of the earth whose very nature is to resist the world's "self-opening".

Clarke's oeuvre shows a consistency of thematic representation: he mainly depicts elements belonging to the earth. However, mimetic landscape depictions of African localities and naturalistic elements do not occur in his work. He composes images of places altered in a specific way in order to reveal a creative human presence. For the same reason, people are never depicted in his later works. Clarke reconstructs places and the implied presence of people imaginatively, since only by means of the imagination can concrete objects be symbolised or brought together in configurations that will reveal

[6] Data of John Clarke's works:
Figure 8: *Stockade I,* Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria, 1982, intaglio etching, 37x55 cm.
Figure 9: *Stockade II,* Unisa Art Gallery, Pretoria, 1982, intaglio etching, 36,5x55 cm.

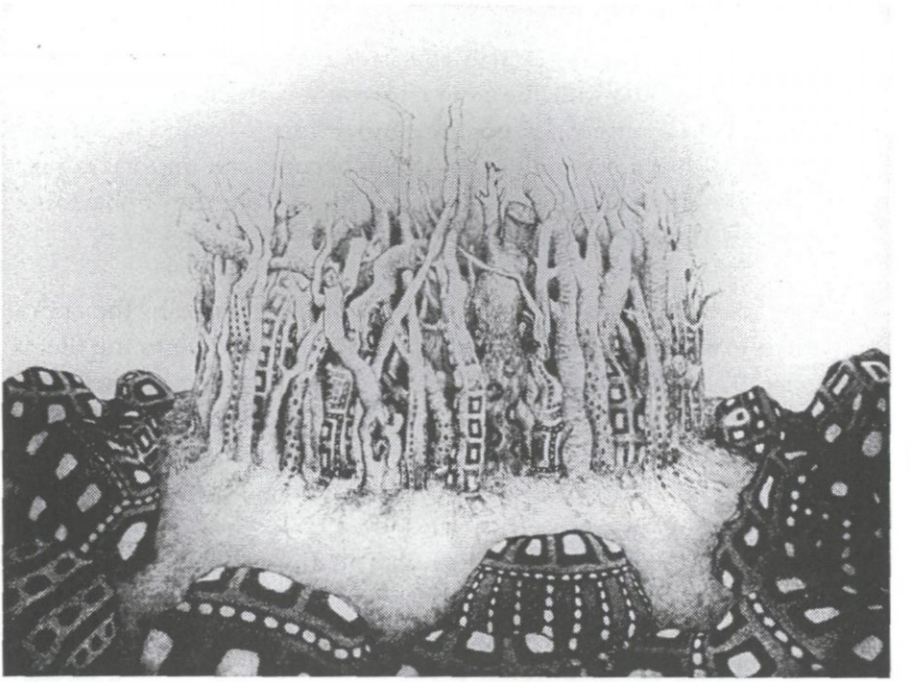

Figure 7: John Clarke, *Stockade I* (Photograph copyright Unisa Art Gallery)

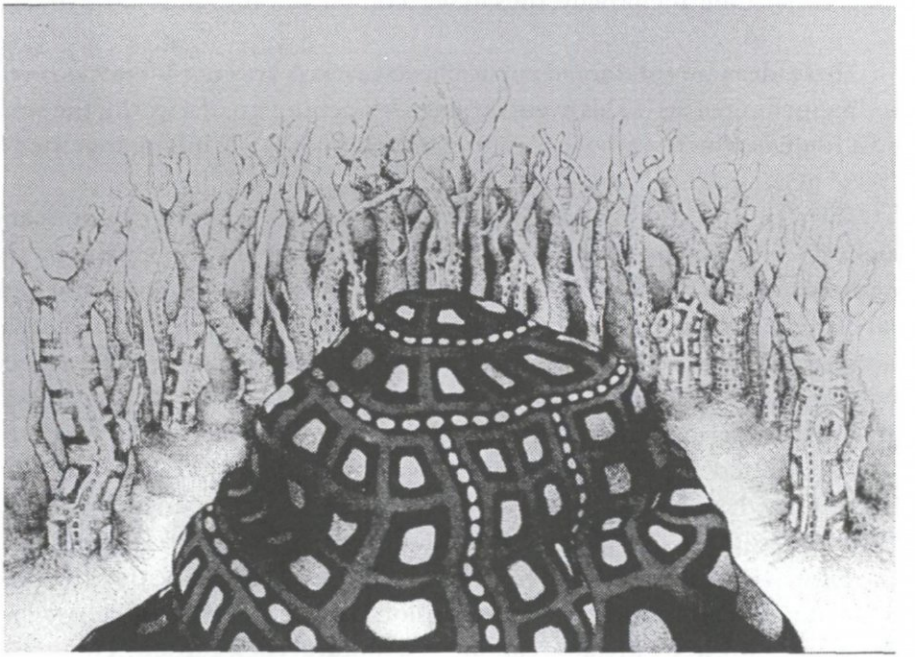

Figure 8: John Clarke, *Stockade II* (Photograph copyright Unisa Art Gallery)

their belonging-together within a greater totality. Such images are non-literal, like Clarke's configurations of earth elements. For example, his stockades and stones are endowed with the power to symbolise acts of revealing and concealing (or, alternatively, self-opening and self-seclusion). The artist's act of endowment is thus a personification which becomes an important part of the topic of revealing and concealing, as is evident from the "behaviour" of the elements in *Stockade I* and *II*.

It is suggested that the essence of Clarke's art is revealed by the creation of an authentic world in which the artist produces, according to the ideals of Heidegger (1971: 54-5), a threefold form of disclosure: first, a disclosure of the strife between world and earth; secondly, a disclosure of the opposition between matter and form, and, finally, a disclosure of the breach (*Riß*) between concealment and unconcealment. Sallis (1989: 185) points out that "strife is not a matter simply of opposition but rather is such that the opponents belong to one another in their very opposition ... . The opponents belong together by having a certain common ground and origin."

In the same sense, matter and form belong together. Opposition between them does not result in duality, nor are they identical. According to Sallis's (1989: 186) interpretation of Heidegger's terminology, one should "discern and preserve their reciprocity, thus to see a bit further into the riddle that art is".

These ideas are considered applicable to Clarke's art since his works reveal the "happening of art". This event evokes the opening up of a world, the work of art itself, in which symbolic meaning is garnered by a bringing together of diverse elements into harmony.

The clearings and boundaries that Clarke defines in terms of stones and stockades may be interpreted as signs or markings on the earth. In the Southern African context, these motifs have a strange magic comparable to that of the shoes that Van Gogh painted, or to Claude Monet's poplars. *Stockade I* and *Stockade II*, are fine examples of images evoking many symbolic aspects of the spirit of the Southern African land and people of which only one aspect – that of place formation and its cultural implications – will be discussed here.

The spotted stones which Clarke depicts in his works derive from his encounter with stones decorated by a Black man called Nukain Mabusa. This encounter influenced the artist to represent stones and stockades as transformed into spotted "beings". The spots which Nukain Mabusa painted on his stones transformed the self-seclusion of those particular stones and opened up a world of artistic creation – a sculptural rock-garden. The stones depicted by Clarke have already been altered by a human hand. Human beings,

who are open to Being, are able to create openness, a world of creation and order. Thus, Clarke does not represent: he re-presents and re-creates the earth in his art in order to create a world in which they can be recognised in the cultural sphere of an historical people.

Stockade I and *II* are unique in the artist's oeuvre as a complementary pair. Both works are composed only of tree stumps and spotted stones that are, in the one case, spread out in a circular pattern and arranged as a boundary and, in the other, contracted into a dense form placed in the centre of a clearing. The uniqueness of these works becomes even more pronounced if they are interpreted as representations of earth elements at play. The play which is suggested transforms concealing into revealing and seclusion into openness.

In *Stockade I* the stones form a semi-circle around a clearing in which the tree stumps are clustered together in a dense bundle which conceals its centre. In *Stockade II* the compositional relation between stones and stockade is reversed: the stones are contracted into one enormous stone in the centre, while the stockade describes a boundary around it. In turn, the two motifs reveal and conceal each other, disperse, and cluster closely into themselves. The compositional reversal also reverses the roles of opening-up and closing-in by means of the arrangement of the stockade and the stones so that they evoke each other's metamorphosis. The duality of the formal arrangement of the two elements in one picture complements that in the other (and vice versa) so that the two pictures reciprocally form a mysterious pair. By alternately revealing themselves (forming a circular boundary) or concealing themselves (forming a dense centre) the arrangements of stockades and stones imply an intelligent presence which guides their advance towards the opposing motif and its corresponding retreat into the concealment of itself. This presence is visible only in terms of a flow of energy which materialises in the strife of the elements arranging themselves into one of two possible formations in equilibrium.

Stones partake of the self-containment (or self-seclusion) of the mere thing. They must therefore be altered (or personified) in order that they may involve themselves in a process of opening up, a process which generates strife with their earthly nature. Therefore, Clarke aspires to re-present reality. He re-presents stones first in a fragmented way in *Stockade I,* and then, in *Stockade II,* gathered together in a unity of form like some enormous archetypal totality, some mythical, primordial earth-navel *(omphalos)* at the centre of an African place. These stones in Clarke's works are, notably, not familiar stones or dead wood. Their spottedness sets them apart from nature. These markings signify that the stones and stockades are not primary natural elements. They

have been ritualised by human hand and are no longer mere things which press downwards and manifest heaviness but have become mythical presences. A creative human being has already encountered them and opposed their self-seclusion by means of alterations in the form of spots. Of this kind of encounter in which two subjects, more specifically nature and man and earth and world, oppose each other, Heidegger (1970: 173) says: "In strife, each opponent carries the other beyond itself. Thus the strife becomes more intense as striving, and more properly what it is. The more strife overdoes itself on its own part, the more inflexible do the opponents let themselves go into the intimacy of belonging together. The earth cannot dispense with the open region of the world if it itself is to appear as earth in the liberated surge of its self-seclusion. The world in turn cannot soar out of the earth's sight if, as the governing breadth and path of all essential destiny, it is to ground itself on a resolute foundation."

At first glance the viewer of *Stockade I* and *II* cannot avoid the impression that the earth elements are in conflict. First, the stones surround the stockade in a kind of ambush; then the reverse happens: the stones contract, their fragments become unified to gain in bulk and so withstand the siege of the stockade. However, the metaphor of strife can be "read" primarily in terms of play. The stockade and the stones mirror each other, a phenomenon which Heidegger explains in terms of mirror-play (Spiegel-Spiel). In this way they become mutually related in their play and "counterplay". Thus, the limits of things in Clarkes's works serve to mark themselves off against one another and thus define a relational context of strife through which harmony is manifested. This paradox is resolved in terms of mirror-play. In Clarke's works the earth, in the distinctive nature it attains through the alteration caused by strife, becomes part of a world created by the work of art. In this world, openness is attained because the difference or conflict between world and earth can be resolved in the process of mirror-play. The conflict does not give rise to discord but affirms that all things in the artwork – including those transposed – belong together and are at play in a world of harmony. In this sense "world" refers to an authentic creation in which all things can be uniquely themselves.

Stockade I and *II* thus embody a relational context of the earth elements, the tree stumps and the stones. Concerning the hiding or concealing of these elements in themselves and their revealing in the world of artistic composition, Fynsk's (1986: 142) elucidation is apt, particularly in understanding the play that is recognisable in Clarke's *Stockade* pair: "But what would hiding, which surely cannot appear insofar as it hides itself (and it must appear in art), disguise itself as, except disguise, when disguise appears? In art, concealment

appears in disguise or as disguise. What is art but *Schein* (semblance, mere appearance), even if it must be thought [of] as grounded within the horizon of truth? The work of art brings the conflictual pair earth and world into a unity which may be called a single differential configuration."

Clearly, the spotted stones and the stockades in Clarke's two works appear in disguise personified by markings. The earth and the world assert their respective natures as the works trace the intimacy of their mutual and conflictual belonging in what Heidegger (1971: 51, 63) terms a basic design, or outline sketch. Heidegger terms this sketch a "rift" (*Riß*) or "rift-design" and says that "it brings the opposition of measure and boundary into their common outline" (1971: 51, 62). Only when the world opens up and marks these bounds as bounds does the "reciprocal accord" of things become a mutual relatedness.

The limits of things, then, serve to mark them off against one another and thus to define a relational context in the manner in which they are portrayed in Clarke's works under discussion. The conflictual pairs world/earth and revealing/concealing are drawn together through play-mirroring and personification, bringing out both their original differentiation and their articulation in a new design. "Thus", Heidegger (1977: 183) says, "art is the creative preserving of truth in the work. Art *then is the becoming and happening of truth*" [Heidegger's italics]. The truth contained in the world, as disclosed by art, is revealed by entering into the hermeneutic circle in which meaning is evoked. In this way Dufrenne's (1983: 209-11) argument that art has a referential function validates Heidegger's insight that art discloses truth.

In Clarke's paired images, revealing and concealing take place in a circular clearing and are interchangeable. Clarke's event of truth occurring in the *Stockades* is dual, but similar – in the way that Heidegger (1929: 39-40) confirms the opposites, "pure Being" and "pure Nothingness", as similar.[7] One may say that a human being's experience of his or her existence (Being) is in terms of his or her continuous confrontation with death and lack of meaning. Caputo (1970: 29) comments on this view of Being by interpreting Heidegger's paradox of concealment and unconcealment as follows: "Nothingness is described as the finitude of Being. Being insofar as it is limited is the Nothing.

[7] Heidegger states: "'Das reine Sein und das reine Nichtes ist also dasselbe.' Dieser Satz Hegels (Wissenschaft der Logik I. Buch W III S. 74) besteht zu Recht. Sein und Nichts gehören zusammen, aber nicht weil sie beide – vom Hegelschen Begriff des Denkens aus gesehen – in ihre Unbestimmtheid und Unmittelbarkeit übereinkommen, sondern weil das Sein selbst im Wesen endlich ist und sich nur in der Transzendenz des in das Nichts hinausgehalteten Daseins offenbart."

The two are not opposites, as western philosophy always assumes. Rather they belong together in the sameness of a single, finite essence."

Thus, in Clarke's works of art, concealment (the earth) and unconcealment (the world created by art) belong together. And the meaning of this is to be found in the idea of art itself which reveals (mirrors) the harmony of play. Clarke's works re-present reality by a process of personification. Humans open up the earth to the magical circle of a symbolic African place into which the invisible and mysterious spirit world enter, according to the beliefs of black people. Indeed, if humans are absent in Clarke's later works, as in *Stockade I* and *II*, space extends into the area in which the viewer stands: he or she, too, is revealed to him– or herself in viewing the scene and undertaking the hermeneutic venture. Understanding Clarke's works is like entering certain archaeological ruins. What vanished people have left behind, the artefacts of Being, the viewer reclaims and reconstructs in his or her imagination as a part of the process of personal world making.

One way of viewing the influence of man on earth is in terms of Heidegger's notion of "heaven" as the artist's inspiration, the region that is the dwelling place of the "god". Related to Clarke's works, the African notion of a spirit-world could also be taken as part of the notion of "heaven". Thus, the mysterious stones and stockades in Clarke's works are moved into patterns which reveal the spirit-world although, first and foremost, sticks and stones represent earth as part of nature. Even though the types of patterns depicted in *Stockade I* and *II* might be encountered in nature (for example, the stones resemble tortoises) this appears unlikely in Clarke's work, since it would be a mimetic reading of animation or animalisation belonging to the African realm, which would exclude humanism and the notion of "world". Clearly, the depicted stones and stockades do not belong to a real place but rather represent a mental creation in which an earth/heaven dialectic is inherent and each opponent enhances the other. In this sense Clarke's work transcends the ethnic realm and is (in a minor sense) comparable to the Greek temple which according to Heidegger (1977: 172) "opens up a world" which "gives ... to men their outlook on themselves" (Heidegger 1977: 1 69). This "world is the self-opening openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of a historical people". However, the opening of a world is an event of truth with universal meaning. If art is indeed an origin, Heidegger (1977: 187) says that it "then must be a forward spring"; it should not "remain a mere appendix [which] can only be carried along as a routine cultural phenomenon".

Clarke's works create worlds out of earth, or at least symbolically, in the sphere of art as *Schein,* they depict this process in which, in turn, every act of

revealing also conceals, so that the dialectic between concealing and revealing becomes the play of art which "has its essence in the intimacy of strife" (Heidegger 1977: 173). This paradox remains a mystery and in this respect Heidegger instructs us that our task is not to solve the "riddle of art", but to recognise it. We may accomplish this by contemplation of the work itself, for in this way alone may an artwork be gathered into its fullness, which Richardson (1963: 594) concludes is the unspoken that lies concealed in the spoken.

Art is never purely self-referential. In the *Stockade* etchings the essence of strife can be interpreted to imply the strife which has always characterised South Africa as a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. Strife, however, binds the opponents together. That is, there is a release at the same time in that being strife-bound, the opponents delineate themselves clearly. Thus, Clarke's approach of revealing the inveterate strife between the white and black peoples of South Africa is less romanticized than Pierneef's and closer to a solution of existing together in one land.

Pierneef's concern is with a virgin land in the process of being transformed or by European settlers, to yield its riches and become a home for them. Clarke, on the other hand, shows the literal truth on the ground: that the landscape had been altered by the indigenous people whose technology, until the present, had not been such that their activities or rituals left it permanently scarred or transformed. With the exception of the mining panels, Pierneef's visions refer to a land which never existed, while Clarke's representations refer to place-making which is no longer practised. Both ways of expression are a response to a lost innocence, a nostalgia for an aesthetic and social ideal which cannot be redeemed.

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ART AND NATION-STATE*

Lev Kreft

A Nation-State is a centralized and sovereign organization of political power. To be sovereign means that the system is self-sustainable, self-manageable and independent. It represents a kind of power which has no other artificial power of human-origin above it. A Nation-State is a power which has its one and only centre in itself.

But, the theories and ideologies which have legitimized Nation, State and Art in modernity are today somehow de-constructed, or, at least, they have experienced what we usually call "cultural turn".

1 A New approach to "Nation"

Ernest Gellner has built foundations, together with quite influential Eric Hobsbawm's ideas on the subject, for new theories of nation and nation-building processes. It is his idea that liberals and Marxists alike shared the same error when they forgot about the power of romantic nationalism. "Nationalism feeds on cultural differences; it turns from them into a principle of political loyalty and social identity (true). Cultural differences are systematically eroded by the processes which constitute the coming of modern society (true). So the more modern societies become, the less material there is for nationalism to work on. (The conclusion follows irresistibly from the premises which are true.) Ergo, nationalism is on the way out. QED."[1] But this syllogism proved to be completely wrong, and by explaining why it is so we can arrive at a better theory of nation and nationalism.

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[1] Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1995, p. 2.

If we put the syllogism into Central, Eastern and Southern European, or Mediterranean perspective, we will see a way of reasoning which was and still is present there. When has such reasoning been used in actual political circumstances and by whom? This kind of Western liberal and Marxist leftist social science has always been mobilized when the interests of the already existing Western, Soviet, or world order colluded with new national liberation movements. There is not much difference between this kind of syllogisms, and the Hegelian theory of historical and non-historical nations, the first raised on the level of independent statehood and the second doomed to submit to them or/and disappear. We are not dealing here just with a case of a false conclusion due to an absent third factor, as Gellner thinks. We have at the same time a case of false pretensions on the side of the speaker of this syllogism, who puts himself or herself on neutral ground, as someone untouched by nationalist discourse. Both premises deny to the Others, i.e. primitive and undeveloped people, the ability to complete their emancipation from the cultural to the political sphere. The historical use of the syllogism was to confirm the inevitable and unchangeable difference between democratic European nations and backward Balkan, Slavic, Oriental or African organic and primitive societies; or, to describe national movements as movements in the wrong direction, which sometimes might be used for a revolutionary perspective and at other times annihilated in the name of the same perspective. From Gellner's position of criticism, it becomes clear that nations were products and constructions of modernism and not something pre-existent, which at the same time means that this organic and primitive image of uncivilized nations which have to be put under inspection and despotic rule is the constructed result of modernization as well. And, by the way, some theories of globalization have just extended to global application this syllogism criticized by Gellner, and announced the end of the nation once again.

Everyday expressions which distinguish between First, Second, and Third Worlds are carved from the same iceberg that hides under the surface of integration into a multicultural and unified humanity, a nationalism of the Nation-State firstcomers and earlycomers. Beside romantic nationalism as the forgotten third partner in the game, as mentioned by Gellner, there is a hidden ghost-partner of non-romantic nationalism in the first two premises. The first premise hides the fact that the nationalism that successfully turned cultural differences into a systematic principle of political loyalty and social identity, is the nationalism which successfully constituted the Nation-State of the speaker of this premise. It hides the fact that the modern liberal democratic state, a model offered for new democracies, was and is a product of nationalism as well.

The need to construct new theory of nation and nationalism arose from the failure of the prevailing theories of the past to account for actual events and movements, because nations and nationalisms did not follow the inevitable conclusion of the syllogism. What old theories could do finally was just to put more or less stress on the evil strength of the atavistic natural forces of blood, soil and language which may triumph over modernist progress, or, on the other side, glorify the eternal power of the same forces. A new way had to be tested with a new premise: nations are not as old as history, they are products of modernism.[2] While we may agree that nations were formed and even produced in the modern period, it is still useful to remember that this shift from premodern roots to modernist construction still allows modernist differentiation between premodern as natural and organic, and modern as artificial and constructed. If nation is believed to be premodern, it is treated as a state of nature that has to be transcended in the manner of Hobbes, or embraced, as in the manner of Rousseau. That is what even new titles inform us of, as *The Invention of Tradition* edited by Eric Hobsbawm in 1994, who in his introduction claims that there are three categories of the systems of social management, the first being: "...a) those establishing or symbolising social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial (underline added by L. K.)".[3]

This shows very well that a shift from the allegedly "natural" or "eternal" existence of nations to their "modern" and "artificial" construction was necessary and long due. But, at the same time it keeps in the field the modernist division between natural and artificial, and between modern and premodern. The short and, at first view unimportant, introduction of *real or artificial* groups is the consequence of such primary divisions, and it certainly provides a basis for speaking of, for instance, people as a real community and a nation as an artificial one, or a monogamous family as natural and "promiscuity" as artificial. The liberal fight against the spectre of nationalism sooner or later brings out the distinction between people and nation as two unreconciliable principles, the first being liberal democratic and second being fundamentalist; and an enlightenment fight against *the kingdoms of darkness* sooner or later brings out the distinction between progressively oriented societies, and those which are

[2] In preface to his "Nations and Nationalisms since 1780", Hobsbawm mentions as fathers of such statements Charleton B. Hayes and Hans Kohn, and its development links first with Karl W. Deutsch, and later with Miroslav Hroch, Ernest Gellner, and a group of their followers in the eighties (Eric Hobsbawm: *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 1993), p. 8.

[3] Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in: *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm, (Cambridge, Cambridge UP: 1994), p. 9.

backward, primitive and thus necessarily brought under some special disciplinary rule of control and punishment untill they reach the level of self-controlled and progressive communities.

I do not claim that these kind of differences are useless, as they are used everywhere and have been in all eras, from "barbarian" and "Greek", to "Christian" and "pagan" onwards[4] but it is certain that they cannot be defended on the grounds of new theories of nation, because they give us, as in Hegel's terminology, two kinds of nations. They were constructed, speaking metaphorically, as Volk theory against People theories.[4] Both kind of theories had to answer the question of where the power of the community resides, to find the location of the overwhelming and radiating unique power which gives shape and presence to these all-embracing unities of human social life. Their logic was different and can show us where and how the above differentiation between natural and artificial, or premodern and modern, has been articulated. For that purpose we can take the examples of *The Federalist Papers* and of Johann Gottfried Herder's *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of the Mankind.*

The Federalist Papers were the first effective marriage of representation and democracy. Where is the centre of all political power in such a system? In *the people,* the Papers declared, and they had in mind a community of individualized members, and this community of men gives decision-making power to their representatives. In his first text on nations and nationalisms in 1972, Eric Hobsbawm confirmed the difference between people and nation in case of the U.S.A.: "*Americanism,* whatever its present political connotation, was originally a universal programme as well as a definition of what the citizen of the USA ought to represent: an invitation to all men to become Americans if they so chose, as well as an ideal description of those who already were. This has not prevented it from turning into a strongly nationalist slogan."[6] In spite of all the other changing ideas about nation, here we have, beside the already mentioned distinction between *natural* or *real,* and *artificial* communities, another distinction which has as a consequence a dichotomy between those

[4] It is interesting that Greeks, when introduced to Christianity, were called Christians, while those who were not were called Greeks (see, for instance, documents of the seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea from 787, in Daniel J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), p. 59 ff.).

[5] "People" in English and "Volk" in German should have approximately the same field of signification, and they had at first, but today the usual translation of "Volk" in English is "Nation".

[6] Eric Hobsbawm, "Some Reflections on Nationalism", in: *Essays in Memory of Peter Nettl: Imagination and Precision in the Social Sciences* (London: Faber&Faber, 1972), p. 395.

Nation-States which were built on an ideology of *People*, and those which were a product of ideologies founded on *nation* and *Volk* ideology. If we say that this difference is undoubtedly real, and connect People as a principle with the revolutions of democratic first-comers (England, USA and France), while the Volk-principle is more obvious for those who developed their Nation-States later, there is still something problematic about the idea of people being a "universal programme". First, it might be "universal" in 1972 to mention "invitation to all men", but today we all feel the need to add immediately that women (and for that matter, children) were excluded. But they were not the only exclusion, and beside Native Americans there were black slaves, ancestors of the African Americans of today, even in Jefferson's own house.[7]

In Herder's work we find the idea of the human community as an organic structure growing into an indivisible entity by human mutual responsibility for each other, and here we find the above mentioned mediaeval concept of *corpus mysticum* in a secular form. The responsibility, namely, is not just between existing members of the community, but to those long gone as well – in the form of responsibility for tradition. It has to be a responsibility to those who will arrive in the future as well, because today's membership in an organic community means building the tradition for tomorrow. This is what *Volk* is about: the community of dead, alive and members yet unborn. In essence, the difference between *people* and *Volk* theories of the nation is not embedded in the universal humanism of the former and particular nationalism of the latter. We can hardly find that kind of nationalism in Herder anyway. The difference lies in the structural idea about the society, and in the *Leitmotiv* linking the members of respective communities together. In the first case, and in it's radical formulations (USA republicanism is not that radical and it is much more similar to Herder's ideas than is usually admitted) society is just a sum of individuals. They are linked together by interests which enable a kind of mutual agreement to respect law and order for the benefit of all. In the second case, society is the basic unity or corpus, and individuals are the members of this corpus, linked together by the eternal responsibility for maintaining this unity – the real existing subject of progressive or redemptive history.

There is nothing universal about Nation-State, be it founded on the people concept or on the Volk concept. Any kind of state is based on some kind of

[7] It is now well known that he not only have slaves, but also had sexual relations with a slave who gave birth to his child. Americans were so appalled by such allegations that a complete medical re-examination had been necessary to prove beyond any doubt (O.K., beyond 96% doubt) that Jefferson was the father.

exclusion and limitation. The difference between people and nation is not, of course, the difference between natural and artificial, but it is not a difference between "universal" and "limited" approach either. They are different ways of producing limitations.

2 Even art is not what it used to be

Art and its theory have experienced a similar cultural turn as theories of nation did. But it does not mean that conceptual developments were simultaneous. That is precisely the reason why postmodernism got its first legitimization from art theories, as there were already existing grounds for the criticism and negation of modernity.

Peter Bürger[8] defined the historical avant-gardes that contested the concept of art as movements of "bringing the arts back into life". Their direct opponent was estheticism, the final stage of the installment of the "Institution Kunst" as special bourgeois and capitalist formation. The avant-garde attack on the institution failed, avant-garde thus became historical, and its anti-art was included into the artistic institutions of the capitalist society.

On the other hand, especially in the States, this historical dimension of avant-garde vs. modern art and its failure did not get much attention, and was embraced in terms of broader concept of modernism.[9] The main preoccupation was to find a definition of art which would not embarrass the definer at the first reversal in the arts, as happened to Clement Greenberg. That meant that it would have to satisfy Weitz's notion of art as an "open concept", but step over his claim that making definitions of art is in itself a fruitless endeavour. The institutional theory of art gives us the crucial definitions of the territory where its prerogatives, procedures and legislation have to be obeyed: "A work of art is an artifact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public".[10] Here, the definition of the artworld as the totality of

[8] Peter Burger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974)

[9] The central figure here is Clement Greenberg, and his "Modernist Painting" from 1960 is often mentioned as the best example (see Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism Vol. 4 – Modernism With a Vengeance, 1957-1969*, ed. by John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

[10] George Dickie, *Introduction to Aesthetics. An Analytic Approach* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997), p. 92 (with additional definitions: "An artist is a person who participates with understanding in the making of a work of art. A public is a set of persons the members of which are prepared in some degree to understand an object which is presented to them. The artworld is the totality of all artworld systems. An artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an artworld public."; ibid., p. 92.).

all artworld systems might ring a bell: it is an astonishing parallel to the modernist idea of the world order as a totality of Nation-States entering as individuals into the inter-national system. Dickie's theory of artworlds is a similar theory of a world system of artistic Nation-States.

This kind of theory, a theory of Art-States and their procedures, is quite conservative really. To preserve art as a certain definable sector, against attacks from new-born artworks and art-theories, the theory is ready to forget art's historical mission and eternal values, but not the institutional procedural character of the artistic order. Instead, it insists on the institutional framework and a certain procedure. Starting with Duchamp and Warhol it arrived at discussions about gorilla and chimpanzee art[11]. Whatever the outcome of these discussions, this kind of theory is ready to embrace relativism just to preserve established procedural rules governing the artworld. That is what makes it a State – it is a safe haven from the natural state of a war of everybody against everybody else. Beside that, it is worth mentioning that it describes contemporary post-modern artistic activity in terms of folk-art. In folk-art, it is not the anonymity of creation which makes it something collective, but its institutional collective "censorship" which forgets all about artworks which were not accepted, or omits unacceptable parts from otherwise accepted artworks. Taking the institutional theory of contemporary art seriously, we would say that the problem is not in recognizing artworks as artworks, but in what is worth remembering at all. To be recognized as an artist, or that your works are recognized as artworks, does not mean much. In our world, there are more artists spread around us than Brillo Boxes available. So, it is more important to get noticed at all, than to be recognized as producer of artworks, and even more important to be remembered for anything at all. Mass and industrial production of artworks have made us unable to see the line which provides an autonomous artistic territory inside the empire of culture, and thus have put all art, highbrow and lowbrow, elite and mass together into something institutionally quite similar to the functioning of folk-art.[12]

If we are allowed to proceed to conclusions, *nation* is now an artificial product of artists and intellectuals, its ultimate goal is *nation state* as a sovereign body which includes *Institution Kunst* as one of its artificial constructive pillars. Art, on the other hand, is a multiplicity of artworlds, organized in respective institutions which obey certain rules of procedure for an artwork to achieve

[11] George Dickie, ibid., p. 85; see also the discussion between George Dickie and Arthur Danto in *Danto and his Critics*, ed. Mark Rollins (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

[12] This feature brought up an interesting insight in contemporary folk studies. See Michael Owen Jones, *Exploring Folk-Art: Twenty Years of Thought on Craft, Work, and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor/ London: UMI, 1987), and other works of (post)modern folk studies.

status. Avant-garde art attacked the institution but failed, institutions won the battle, but the price is that there are no criteria left beside an empty institutional gesture.

3 Slovenia and Africa

Slovenia is not "haunted" by its history but by its lack of it, and no kind of idealised or diminishing image in the eyes of the West presents the real problem. The problem is the lack of any identity at all. This absence in eyes of the beholder is well evidenced if we read the diaries and other texts of foreign travellers. It seems that they crossed directly from the "West" to the "Orient", or to the "East", without any perception of this "in-between" Slovenian passage. This absence in time and space is what haunted the Slovenian national movement, and presents a problem even today. Whatever is tried to present and represent Slovenia as a special and different entity seems to fail. It has a name, but it gets mixed up with Slovakia and Slavonia. It has a flag, but it gets mixed with a Russian flag, and these red-blue-white flags are all so similar anyway. It would like to be seen as the first bastion of the West on its far East frontiers, but it is usually invisible, like a midland with no identity, or recognized as Ex-Yugoslav post-communist Balkan country in transition (what a disaster of mapping!). It is a case worth comparing to Dickie's plumber walking over the artwork without noticing that it is one.[13] In the case of Slovenia, this "being-walked-over-unrecognized" feeling is all over the territory, and all over its history.

We have no time to deal with the long history of our dream nation. What we can do here is just get a glimpse on one of the moments of this "longue durée" history of cultural building and fighting. The moment is after 1848 when Austria emerged from its "Bach phase" of surveillance and repression against "Nationalists" and "Liberals". The atmosphere, with still restrained democracy and with unfriendly German nationalism more or less endangering all the others, softened enough to allow for some political activity. The Slovenian cultural scene has divided itself into two bitterly opposed camps, conservatives and liberals. There were still no political parties, so these two camps fought cultural battles. In the middle of these battles was Fran Levstik, a liberal who introduced the demand for "realism" into Slovenian literature, and defined his realism as a kind of literature which would enable "Slovenian to recognize Slovenian as in a mirror". This formula tells very well what had

[13] George Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction,* (Indianapolis : Pegasus, 1971), p. 99.

been the aim – the artistic representation of the Slovenian nation which would organize Slovenians into a nation. The addressee of literature, and its real hero, should be the Slovenian people, the rural population who spoke the untainted language and needed just a bit of nationalist encouragement to strengthen their Slovenian roots into an unbeatable national fortress against the Germanization which attacked the towns and cities. The literary reality of this style was what they call in national literary science "romantic realism", but Levstik's problem was that, himself a more or less romantic poet, he could not be satisfied with what the Slovenian prose of that time had to offer. His friend Josip Jurčič misunderstood him and went onto describe "ordinary rural people" in a manner which introduced weird marginal characters from the country pub into an otherwise romantic love story, like putting three or four Falstaffs faltering through Romeo-and-Juliet tragedy. So, as is the usual outcome, Levstik himself had to show what a proper Slovenian national mirroring narrative should be. "Martin Krpan" was his answer, written in a "demotic" proposal for a national literary language and style, and telling a story which has remained a must of all curricular introductions into Slovenian literature untill present times. And here it is.

Habsburg Empire is, once again, in danger. A mighty Turk called Brdavs arrives in Vienna and challenges the Emperor's best fighters, killing them one after another. When all hope is lost, somebody brings up the name of Martin Krpan, a simple Slovenian well known to the Emperor's customs officials, tax collectors and policemen, because he has been evading paying his duties and survives by smuggling salt, while giving a beating to the Empire's officials even when they totally outnumber him. A culturally unspoiled man from the "demos", a self-made man, he was a Christian (Levstik tells us that his home is on St. Trinity Hill) and thus he obeys, if reluctantly, the Emperor's request to come and help. In Vienna, they try to make a real knight of him, but he destroys all the armour, and declines all the best horses from the Emperor's stable. Instead of this he chooses a tree which the Empress liked the most for her afternoon shadow-napping, and makes himself a weapon from it. He goes into battle with his mule, a Slovenian version of Don Quichote's Rosinante, and, unlike the Spanish knight, wins the fight and beheades the Turk in a matter-of-fact manner, without any hate and with compassion, as a real Christian. After this triumph on the streets of Vienna, his victory becomes a problem and embarrassment. The Emperor's prime minister suspects that Krpan will want a reward in political terms, may be even his job, while the Empress hates him because he is so simple and because he deconstructed her shadow. The Emperor is a good man, but he cannot fight against governmental intrigues and his own wife, and Krpan stays in

Vienna because, afraid of his strength and popularity, they do not know how to get rid of him. Finally, when asked what he would like as a reward, Krpan answers that the best reward would be to let him go home, as he is already homesick, but if the Emperor wants to give him something of use, let it be a permit which would give Krpan the permanent right to smuggle. It is not that it presents a real problem, but beating the Emperor's officials on an everyday basis is in itself an unnecessary nuisance.

Obviously, Martin Krpan represents the Nation in a situation when art is an Ideological Apparatus of the Invisible Slovenian State. In him, we find a simple and unspoiled barbarian who is capable of taking care of himself, and his natural wit belittles all modern ways of great Empire. He has a culture of his own, living on the margins of Order as a smuggler. Order has no power over him. However, as a good Christian he is also a good and obeying Subject. His humorous contempt for the Emperor, who cannot reign his own Empire, and for the Empress and ministers who dominate his will with their private interests, and his physical force and symbolic power over them – all that makes us think about Hašek's Švejk on one side, and about Micić's Zenitist Balkan Barbarogenious on the other. His political sting is obvious, but not dangerous: leave me alone to my ways, as that will hurt no one. When you need me as the last resort against the Others, just call me, for I know how degenerate and helpless you are, and feel pity for you. You need me on the frontiers, and the payment I want is not democracy or independence, it is being left alone to my small businesses on the margins of the Order. If you do not touch me, I will make myself invisible.

That is, of course, quite a conservative program for a liberal, but you should view the images of the national from the conservative side. Even in its anti-modernist disguise, this demophillia turned into something quite different without any problem just a generation after Levstik, when Ivan Cankar, the writer of *fin-de-siècle* modernism, announced that the Slovenian Nation was a Proletarian Nation. By that he did not mean that we have numerous families, and not only that we are in the position of a slave-nation. The proletarian position is one of universal insight, and of universal redemption. In Martin Krpan story the big dreams of a small nation are hidden, to be revealed just a historical moment later.

Africa might make for an interesting appendix. To understand the African situation of today when it is depicted as a "black hole" on the globe, and as a narrative of unending massacres between primitive tribes and cannibalistic politicians, we have to formulate the problem of African identity on the background of its historical roots in colonialism. Here is the beginning of Mamdani's book *Citizen and Subject*:

"Discussions on Africa's present predicament revolve around two clear tendencies: modernist and communitarian... The liberal solution is to locate politics in civil society, and the African solution is to put Africa's age old communities at the centre of African politics. One side calls for a regime that will champion rights, and the other stands in defence of culture. The impasse in Africa is not only at the level of practical politics. It is also a paralysis of perspective."[14] You could without problem put any possible country in place of Africa here. This paralysis of perspective, and confrontation between modernism and communitarianism, is the national dilemma of the post-modern, or post-industrial, or global (whatever label you like most) condition. Art is still involved in these confrontations, on both ideological sides; the problem is that there is a feeling of forgery on both sides as well. It is not that just the "Eurocentric" side is "imported", the same goes for "the Native" and "African" side as well. They are both artificial, products of colonialism, or, if you prefer, the state of modernity. The coloniallist/native question has been reformulated into an African national question, but the relation between Eurocentrism and Africanism, between modernisation and communitarianism is still the relation of the daily African journey. Confronted with a bad image of Africa, Africans may themselves say sometimes that this is just the childhood of new nations. If they don't say it, we say it for new-born nation-states of the Balkans.

4 Conclusion

Let us begin the conclusion with some remarks on the introduction of the "artificial" character of nation. If confronted with the previous theories of nation as a "natural" community, it is a very reasonable move. But, when combined with the differentiation between "artificial" and "real" communities, it becomes confused and suspect. The reason for suspicion is the obvious use of such differentiation to prevent new nations from building their artificial communities: "In all these views I believe, there is a marked (and, in my opinion, ahistorical) discomfort with non-western societies acquiring national independence, which is believed to be 'foreign' to their ethos. Hence the repeated insistence on the Western provenance of nationalist philosophies that are therefore ill-suited to, and likely to be abused by Arabs, Zulus,

[14] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject. Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Kampala – Cape Town – London: Fountain Publishers/David Phillip Publishers/ James Currrey Ltd., 1996), p. 3.

Indonesian, Irish, or Jamaicans."[15] We have quite a political situation here, and to deal with it correctly, we will say that Edward Said is on the right side against these kind of remarques as much as "artificial" theory of nation is on the right side against "natural" one.

Still, there is something wrong here, and if we leave political problems aside, what is wrong is the vocabulary. In discourses on nation and new nations, we have constantly, after the "natural" background of nation has been dropped out, found the conceptual pair of artificial against real, and invention as a method. But we know that the correct pairs are natural vs. artificial, and fictitious vs. real. If nations are not natural but artificial, it does not mean that they are not real. Fictions have no existence, but artificial things are quite real. And today it is hard to tell sometimes what is the difference. To make something artificial out of something natural, you need invention and/or discovery. To make something fictitious real, you need production. That artists and intellectuals invented nation sounds agreeable in the post-modern condition, but it is not true. Intellectuals and artists have been very busy "naturalizing" their respective nations, and thus making their artificial character invisible, but they did not invent nations. Artists and intellectuals were involved in the production of this fiction. With latecomers to modernization, this involvement became even more necessary. Their involvement is quite understandable. To produce an artificial real mechanism by putting together natural and fictitious parts it takes scientific and artistic technique/*techne*. Theories which suggest that we could get rid of nations if artists and intellectuals would stop inventing them, or theories which offer a possible easy deconstruction of nations because they are artificial constructions anyway, and theories which involve the cathegorization of nations into the camps of real and artificial ones – all these theories are not just politically incorrect. They are theoretically incorrect.

With this correction of theories of nation we will now move to art. Artists have not invented the nation, but they did naturalize its artificial existence, and produce its real presence from fictitious, artificial and natural parts. What might be of interest is not the "historical responsibility" of artists and intellectuals for producing such a monster, or their glorious authorship in producing such a heroic soul of world redemptive projects. What is so special in art that it has to be involved in naturalizing and productive social processes?

The answer most cherished by our discipline is – the aesthetic. Already in Baumgarten it has a special position. With Kant's criticism, aesthetic achieved the honorary position which it, more or less, still holds today, albeit in an

[15] Edward W. Said, *Cultural Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 261.

indebted and mortgaged empire: "The powerful interest that governs the third *Critique* is lodged in the image of the gap, gulf, or separation of realms that divides our interests in the world of appearances (nature) from our interest in achieving existence in a 'realm of ends'."[16] There is a gap to be bridged, and through the transcending of this gap, we do not arrive just to a safe passage from one side to the other. We produce "the whole" literally – over the hole. Our secular world, as Lacanians could well explain us, is not built on a rock, but on a void.

Identification between art and aesthetic function has been nearly complete, even if Kant did not leave any rules which would point in that direction. The representational form of mimetic art has been the best means for naturalizing artificial communities, and for producing real ones from natural and fictitious materials. The Prague School was the first one to point to the aesthetic function as the function present in all discourses and languages and not just in art, while on the other hand it underlined that artwork is a discourse in which aesthetic functions dominate, organizing all the other functions around it. And aesthetic functions as a kind of turn which instead of using language as the means of communication turns our attention to the means of communication themselves.

Today, even this seems to be saying too much. There is still art which has the aesthetic function as a dominant one. But, "Does the aesthetic definition of art ... supply a sufficient condition for art? No, and for reasons with which we are already very familiar. Many non-artworks are intended to have the capacity to promote the kind of attention and contemplation that the aesthetic definition of art ascribe to all and only artworks."[17] This is the first change, well known through the theorizing, for instance, of Wolgang Welsch – the whole world is full of aesthetic, it is an aestheticized world, and as art has lost its primacy in the representational-mimetic function, it is loosing the battle for its instalment as the prevailing producer of aesthetic affects. On the other hand, "There is a popular tendency to use the notion of aesthetic experience as a synonym for experiencing art in general ... Undeniably, these responses are among the most important experiences to be derived from artworks in general. However, they are not the only ones, nor the only legitimate ones, nor are they even the most important ones with respect to every single artwork."[18]

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[16] Anthony J. Cascardi, *Consequences of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 82.

[17] Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Art. A Contemporary Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 179-180.

[18] Ibid., p. 200.

It is not art as such that is involved in nation-making but the aesthetic possibility to represent, to bridge and to universalize on a territory without any certain grounds and limits, across the gap. To cross a gap which frightens you, you have to turn your attention to the things above and forget about the abyss down there. This shift of the attention is what the aesthetic function does. Art, especially in the nineteenth century, has been the main means of producing these aesthetic effects. Today, its sublime and missionary role is over, and the dominant position of the aesthetic function in artworks might be over too. In any case, there are already artworks which have no aesthetic function at all, and there are artworks which have other dominant functions. Both might be new in the Western culture of modernity, but are nothing special if discussed in the framework of different historical or contemporary cultures and positions that art and artworks occupied and occupy in them.

The coincidence of globalization, which is just the final outcome of nation-making movements, or, better stated, of two Western inventions (the centralized sovereign nation-state and the international system of states) become universal, with global aestheticization, very probably means that this new global world is not without its gaps, and is in that way not so very different from the nineteenth century. The need to forget about the abyss with the help of an aesthetic shift of attention might be even greater. Global aestheticization is a certain sign of existing gaps which have to be transcended, and a certain sign of a global which given its lack of universality has to (re)produce itself using aesthetic naturalization and production. Which means, if we phrase it along the lines of Kant and Cascardi, that our global world at least has some of the "constitutive opacity".[19] What such an opacity needs is Kant's kind of rigorous criticism which, among other things, would show that "art cannot unify but can at best render possible a transition between them [i.e., the 'two worlds' bridged into a 'whole' one]".[20] And if art is no longer the main constructor of bridges (and it certainly was not for Kant) any more, and as we care about art more then we care about the global world, otherwise we would not be aestheticians – what is the fate of art, and its noble function?

Well, while to produce some pleasure, fun and even just peaceful leisure time might not be an endeavour to unworthy for the lofty status of art, there is still another possibility which is already at work, invented by avant-garde art. Jean-François Lyotard has found it in Marcel Duchamp's *Given*: "This uncommentable thing has nothing mystical about it: it's simply the

[19] Anthony Cascardi, op. cit., p. 91.
[20] Ibid., p. 98.

incommensurable brought back into commentary. Commentary will perforce be incongruent with the work."[21]

With this possible function, art is distinguishable and very well distinguished from other ways of culture. And that kind of effect or function, working in reverse compared with art's productive and affirmative function, will become very important, even politically important, if our feelings and predictions about globalization are correct. While the art well embedded into cultural context, alike to a nation, tells us to proceed without loosing sight of far-away horizons of progress, the other kind of art, distancing itself from the seemingly productive endeavours of building the whole on the bridge over the abyss, is producing signposts diverting our gaze to the ground: "Mind the gap!"

[21] Jean-François Lyotard, *Duchamp's TRANS/formers* (California: Venice Lapis Press, 1990), p. 11.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

LARS-OLOF ÅHLBERG, professor of Aesthetics, Uppsala University, Researcher in Comparative Aesthetics, The Swedish Research Council. Formely Lecturer in Cultural Studies, Uppsala University. Chairman of the Nordic Society of Aesthetics. Publications: *Concepts of Realism in Literature and Art: An Historical and Philosophical Study* Ph.D thesis 1988 (in Swedish), *Aesthetic Matters: Essays Presented to Göran Sörbom on His 60th Birthday*, ed. with T. Zaine, 1994; Articles on the philosophy of the humanities, philosophical aesthetics, theory of the arts (visual art, music and literature) in *The British Journal of Aesthetics, The Journal of Aesthetic Education, Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Kunstwissenschaft, Filozofski Vestnik, Nordisk estetisk tidskrift* (Nordic Journal of Aesthetics). Current Research Interest: Modern and Postmodern Architecture; Language, Art and Cultural Identity.

ANTHONY J. CASCARDI holds the Goldman Chair in the Humanities at the University of California, Berkeley, with appointments in three departments: Comparative Literature, Rhetoric, and Spanish. He is currently Chair of the Department of Comparative Literature. Cascardi has written numerous books and articles on literature and philosophy, early modern romance literature, Cervantes, and aesthetic theory from Kant to the present. His books include *The Subject of Modernity, Literature and the Question of Philosophy, Ideologies of History in the Spanish Golden Age,* and *Consequences of Enlightenment.*

PAUL CROWTHER is Professor of Philosophy in the Centre for Professional Ethics at the University of Lancashire. He was previously Reader in Aesthetics and the History of Art at the University of Oxford. He has written a number of books (and many papers) on aesthetics, and his latest book – *The Transhistorical Image: Philosophizing Art and Its History* – will be published by Cambridge University Press in 2002.

ALEŠ ERJAVEC is Research Director in the Institute of Philosophy at the Scientific Research Centre of SASA in Ljubljana and Professor of Aesthetics in the University of Ljubljana. He has been the President of the Slovenian Society of Aesthetics (1984-1999) and is President of the International Association for Aesthetics (1998-2001). His publications include *On Aesthetics, Art and Ideology* (Ljubljana 1983), *Aesthetics and Epistemology* (Ljubljana 1984), *Ideology and Art of Modernism* (Ljubljana 1988, Sarajevo 1991), *Ljubljana, Ljubljana. Slovenian*

Art and Culture of the Eighties (with Marina Gržinić; Ljubljana 1991), *Aesthetics and Critical Theory* (Ljubljana 1995) and *Towards the Image* (Ljubljana 1996).

JIANPING GAO, born 1955, Ph.D. in aesthetics from Uppsala University, Sweden, Associate Professor of aesthetics and literature of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Assistant General Secretary of Chinese Society for Aesthetics. Main books: *The Expressive Act in Chinese Painting – From Calligraphy to Painting* (Stockholm 1996 in English); *Secrets in Painting – A Study of Chinese Aesthetics* (Hong Kong 1995 in Chinese); *Out of the Chinatown* (Beijing 2000 in Chinese). He also published more than 20 papers in different journals in China and other countries and about 100 short essays in verious newspapers and magazines in China.

LEV KREFT, born 1951, Associate Professor of Aesthetics, Head of the Department of Philosophy (University of Ljubljana) and current President of Slovenian Society for Aesthetics. Has published books and studies on avant-garde, postmodernism, and post-socialist art and society.

EVA KIT WAH MAN is at present an associate professor in the Department of Religion & Philosophy and the Head of the Humanities programme of Hong Kong Baptist University. She got her Ph.D. in Chinese Studies from Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1990. She had published 14 books in Chinese and numerous academic articles in both Chinese and English. Her research output includes Chinese philosophy, comparative aesthetics and feminist aesthetics.

ESTELLE A. MARÉ obtained post-graduate qualification in literature, architecture, town planning and art history. She worked as a translator and architect before being appointed in the Department of Art History at the University of South Africa in 1980. Her publication are of an interdisciplinary nature and she is at present preparing a monograph on El Greco's angelic figures.

NICHOLAS J. COETZEE studied Art History at the University of Pretoria and taught in the Department of Art History for eleven years at the same university before he was appointed in the Department of Art History at the University of South Africa. His most important publication is *Pierneef, land and landscape*, which represents a revisionist approach to South African landscape. He is at present working on a book on the Voortrekker Monument outside Pretoria.

HEINZ PAETZOLD is Professor of Cummunication Theory at the University of Applied Sciences in Hamburg and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kassel. From 1992 to 1997 he has been Head of the Department of Theory at the Jan van Eyck Akademie. His publications include the books: *Ästhetik der neueren Moderne* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990); *Die Realität der symbolischen Formen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994); *Ernst Cassirer – Von Marburg nach New York* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995) and: *The Symbolic Language of Culture, Fine Arts and Arhitecture* (Trondheim: FF Edition, 1997); *Symbol, Culture, City. Five Exercises in Critical Philosophy of Culture* (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Akademie, 2000).

WOLFGANG WELSCH is currently Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at Jena University (Germany). Before he had been teaching at the universities of Erlangen-Nürnberg, the Free University of Berlin, the universities of Bamberg and Magdeburg, the Humboldt-University of Berlin, at Stanford University and Emory University. He received the Max Planck Research Award in 1992. His research areas include epistemology, aesthetics and art theory, philosophy of culture, Hegel and analytic philosophy. He has written over 100 articles and published 12 books (4 as editor) on aesthetics, epistemology and cultural philosophy. His books include *Unsere postmoderne Moderne* (1987, 6th ed. 2001), *Ästhetisches Denken* (1990, 5th ed. 1999), *Vernunft* (1995, 3rd ed. 2000), *Grenzgänge der Ästhetik* (1996) and *Undoing Aesthetics* (1997).

ERNEST ŽENKO, MA, is currently employed as an Assistant at the Institute of Philosophy of the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. At the moment he is working on his doctoral thesis in aesthetics entitled »Art and Totality«. He has published articles on aesthetics, art, culture and science, and the book *Space and Art: the Space between Philosophy, Art and Science – Leonardo da Vinci, László Moholy-Nagy, and Andy Warhol* (Ljubljana 2000 in Slovenian).

ABSTRACTS • IZVLEČKI

ALEŠ ERJAVEC

Aesthetics: Philosophy of Art or Philosophy of Culture?

Key words: *aesthetics, philosophy of culture, modernism, art*

In the Hegelian philosophie tradition aesthetics is interpreted as philosophy of art. Since already Hegel envisions a possible end of art, for authors such as Henri Lefebvre and Luc Ferry the development of art in the previous century seems only to confirm the views offered by Hegel. A different view is that of Arthur Danto who speaks not only of a "postromantic" art (Peter Bürger) but of a "post-historical" one. In spite of such views it appears that art and therefore aesthetics as a philosophy of art have lost much of their former importance. What therefore often occurs in relation to contemporary culture are attempts to develop a philosophy which would be focused on culture which is gaining in importance and which would thus complement the extant philosophy of art. The author discusses two such attempts, namely those of Heinz Paetzold and Fredric Jameson. Nonetheless, in his view, in both cases the theories offered remain insufficient and in need of further development if they are to philosophically grasp the current changes in art and culture.

ALEŠ ERJAVEC

Estetika: Filozofija umetnosti ali filozofija kulture

Ključne besede: *estetika, filozofija kulture, modernizem, umetnost*

Heglovska filozofska tradicija razlaga estetiko kot filozofijo umetnosti. Ker že sam Hegel predvidi možni konec umetnosti, se avtorjem kot sta Henri Lefebvre in Luc Ferry zdi, da razvoj umetnosti v preteklem stoletju le potrjuje poglede, ki jih je ponudil Hegel. Drugačno stališče ima Arthur Danto, ki ne govori le o »postromantični« umetnosti (Peter Bürger) pač pa tudi o »posthistorični«. Navkljub takšnim pogledom je videti, da je umetnost in s tem estetika kot filozofija umetnosti izgubila veliko svojega prejšnjega pomena. Ko gre za sodobno kulturo, se zato pogosto dogaja, da poskušamo razviti filozofijo, ki bi bila osredotočena na kulturo, ki pridobiva na pomenu in ki bi tako dopolnjevala obstoječo filozofijo umetnosti. Avtor obravnava dva taka poskusa, in sicer poskusa Heinza Paetzolda in Fredrica Jamesona. Avtor meni, da v obeh primerih te teorije ostajajo nezadostne in potrebujejo nadaljnje razvijanje, če naj filozofsko zapopadejo sedanje spremembe v umetnosti in kulturi.

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LARS-OLOF ÅHLBERG

Aesthetics, Philosophy of Culture and 'The Aesthetic Turn'

Key words: *aesthetics, philosophy of culture, transculturality, aestheticization*

In sections I-II the renewed interest in aesthetics, manifested in a wealth of recent introductory texts on aesthetics, is discussed. I argue here for a historically informed philosophy of art – only too often an historical approach and a systematic-analytic approach to the problems of aesthetics have been thought to be mutually exclusive. In section III I discuss the research proposal for the renewal of the humanities of the Faculties of the Humanities and Social

Sciences at Uppsala University: »Cultural Analysis and Contemporary Criticism«, of which »The Aesthetic Turn« is a subsection. It is an interesting and timely proposal, but it raises some difficult and controversial issues concerning the concepts of the aesthetic and of aesthetics, as do the writings of philosophers associated with »the aesthetic turn« in philosophy. In section IV I criticize Richard Shusterman's views on the »aestheticization of ethics and life-styles«, arguing that an aestheticization of ethics and morals implies the dissolution of ethics and morality; the aestheticization of ethics and life-styles is perhaps a reality in many postmodern societies but it poses both philosophical and moral problems that the advocates of »aestheticization« (Rorty, Welsch, Shusterman) underestimate. Similar considerations apply to Wolfgang Welsch's »aestheticization of theory and knowledge« in his book *Undoing Aesthetics*. In section V I argue that Welsch's proposal to widen the horizons of aesthetics is commendable but that the abandonment of an art-centred aesthetics is problematic. To my mind Welsch's »transaesthetics« in spite of some of its interesting and positive suggestions rests on a conflation of »the aesthetic« and »aesthetics«.

Lars-Olof Åhlberg

Estetika, filozofija kulture in »estetski obrat«

Ključne besede: *estetika, filozofija kulture, transkulturnost, estetizacija*

V prvih dveh razdelkih članka teče razprava o obnovljenem zanimanju za estetiko, ki se kaže v bogastvu novih uvodnih besedil o estetiki. Tu zagovarjam zgodovinsko utemeljeno filozofijo umetnosti – vse prevečkrat sta bila zgodovinski pristop in sistematično-analitični pristop k problemom estetike pojmovana kot medsebojno izključujoča. V tretjem razdelku govorim o raziskovalnem predlogu za obnovo humanistični ved na Fakulteti za humanistiko in družboslovje na univerzi v Uppsali: »Kulturna analiza in sodobna kritika«, katere del je »Estetski obrat«. Gre za zanimiv in času primeren predlog, vendar pa prinaša nekatera težka in sporna vprašanja, ki zadevajo pojme iz estetike in o estetiki, kakšna se pojavljajo tudi v pisanjih filozofov, povezanih z »estetskim obratom« v filozofiji. V četrtem razdelku kritiziram poglede Richarda Shustermana na »estetizacijo etike in življenjskih slogov« in trdim, da estetizacija etike in morale pomeni njun razkroj; estetizacija etike in življenjskih slogov je morda dejanskost v mnogih postmodernih družbah, vendar zastavlja tako filozofske kot moralne probleme, ki jih zagovorniki »estetizacije« (Rorty, Welsch, Shusterman) podcenjujejo. Podoben premislek velja tudi za Welschevo »estetizacijo teorije in vednosti« v njegovem delu *Undoing Aesthetics*. V petem razdelku ugotavljam, da je Welschev predlog za razširitev obzorij estetike hvalevreden, vendar pa je problematična opustitev estetike, osredotočene na umetnost. Po mojem mnenju Welscheva »transestetika« kljub nekaterim svojim zanimivim in pozitivnim pobudam počiva na zlitju »estetskega« in »estetike«.

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Paul Crowther

The Dangers of Postmodernity – A Philosophical Response

Key words: *aesthetics, philosophy of culture, postmodernity, existence*

In this paper some key dangers presented by patterns of existence in the postmodern lifeworld, are identified. These dangers consist of *symbolic arrest*, epistemological nihilism, and technological innovations such as cyborgs and "artilects". It is further argued that such dangers can be obviated by a *refoundational* philosophical response. (A response of this kind is one which links cognition to constants bond up with the nature of human embodiment, but which allows that these constants are activated in contrasting ways under different historical conditions.)

Paul Crowther

Nevarnosti postmodernosti – filozofski odgovor

Ključne besede: *estetika, filozofija kulture, postmodernost, eksistenca*

V članku avtor izpostavlja nekatere ključne nevarnosti, ki so predstavljene z vzorci eksistence v postmodernem življenjskem svetu. Te nevarnosti se sestojijo v *simbolni kapi*, epistemološkem nihilizmu in tehnoloških inovacijah, kot so kiborgi in »artilekti«. Nadalje trdi, da je mogoče takšne nevarnosti obiti z *refundacionalističnim* odgovorom filozofije. (Te vrste odgovor je tisti, ki spoznanje poveže s konstantami, vezanimi na naravo človeškega utelešenja, vendar obenem dopušča, da se te konstante pod različnimi zgodovinskimi pogoji aktivirajo na različne načine.)

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Wolfgang Welsch

Transculturality: The Changing Form of Cultures Today

Key words: *transculturality, aesthetics, philosophy of culture, globalisation*

The concept of transculturality suggests a new conceptualization of culture differing from classical monocultures and the more recent conceptions of interculturality and multiculturality. The traditional description of cultures as islands or spheres is descriptively wrong, because cultures today are characterized internally by a pluralization of identities, and externally by border-crossing contours. Furthermore, this traditional concept, which emphasizes homogeneity and delineation, is normatively dangerous in structurally suppressing differences and encouraging separatism and violent conflicts. The concepts of interculturality und multiculturalism tackle some of these ills, but their basic flaw remains the presupposition of cultures as homogeneous islands or enclosed spheres. The concept of transculturality seeks conversely to articulate today's cultural constitution, one characterized by intertwinement, and to elicit the requisite conceptional and normative consequences. Furthermore, transculturality is found at the individual microlevel too: most of us are cultural hybrids. Transculturality aims for cultures with the ability to link and undergo transition whilst avoiding the threat of homogenization or uniformization. Cultural diversity arises in a new mode as a transcultural blend rather than a juxtaposition of clearly delineated cultures. While it is currently assumed that we are going global and are, by doing this, uniformizing more and more, the concept of transculturality questions this line of thinking. The tendency towards transculturality does not mean that our cultural formation is becoming the same all over the world. On the contrary, processes of globalization and becoming transcultural imply a great variety of differentiation. Transcultural webs woven from the same sources can differ greatly and be quite specific and even individualistic. The concept of transculturality counters the one-sidedness of both globalization and particularization diagnoses.

Wolfgang Welsch

Transkulturnost: spremenjena oblika kultur danes

Ključne besede: *transkulturnost, estetika, filozofija kulture, globalizacija*

Pojem transkulturnosti napeljuje na novo pojmovanje kulture, ki se razlikuje od klasičnih monokultur ter od sodobnejših pojmovanj interkulturnosti in multikulturnosti. Tradicionalni opis kultur kot otokov ali sfer, je deskriptivno napačen; kulture danes notranje označuje pluralizacija identitet, zunanje pa preseganje meja lastnih okvirov. Ta tradicionalni pojem, ki poudarja homogenost in razmejitev, je nadalje normativno nevaren, ker strukturalno zatira

razlike in spodbuja separatizem ter nasilne konflikte. Pojma interkulturnosti in multikulturnosti rešujeta nekatere izmed teh težav, vendar njuna osnovna pomanjkljivost ostaja v tem, da predpostavljata kulture kot homogene otoke ali omejene sfere. Nasprotno želi pojem transkulturnosti poiskati takšno artikulacijo današnje zgradbe kulture, ki jo označuje preplet, in izpeljati potrebne pojmovne in normativne konsekvence. Transkulturnost je nadalje mogoče najti tudi na individualni mikroravni: večina nas je kulturnih hibridov. Transkulturnost meri na kulture s sposobnostjo povezovanja in prehajanja, ob hkratnem izogibanju nevarnosti homogenizacije in uniformizacije. Kulturna raznolikost se pojavi na nov način, bolj kot transkulturna mešanica kakor pa kot sopostavljanje jasno zamejenih kultur. Medtem ko se danes običajno domneva, da postajamo globalni ter s tem bolj in bolj uniformni, pojem transkulturnosti postavlja pod vprašaj ta način mišljenja. Težnja k transkulturnosti ne pomeni, da postaja naša kulturna formacija enaka povsod po svetu. Nasprotno, procesi globalizacije in transkulturnosti obsegajo veliko raznolikost diferenciacije. Transkulturne mreže, stkane iz istih virov, se lahko zelo razlikujejo in so lahko prav specifične in celo individualistične. Pojem transkulturnosti nasprotuje enostranskosti tako globalizacijskih kot partikularizacijskih diagnoz.

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Anthony Cascardi

Philosophy of Culture and Theory of the Baroque

Key words: *aesthetics, philosophy of culture, baroque, deep structure*

This essay takes the challenges posed by a definition of the baroque as model for thinking about the ways in which problems in aesthetic history can shape a philosophy of culture. Attempts to define the baroque as a period within art history have led to an astounding degree of confusion. The search for unifying stylistic markers amidst this confusion has led critics to seek deep structures, while historical analyses of the deep structures fail to sustain their connections to style or form. Using the baroque as a model, this essay looks at examples from the visual arts and architecture in order to demonstrate the ways in which deep-structure theories of culture falter by presupposing a more rigid distinction between surface and depth than may be the case. Drawing in part on Deleuze's notion of the fold, this essay proposes that we look at culture as driven by forces that are both materialized in surfaces that are themselves part of any »deep structure.«

Anthony Cascardi

Filozofija kulture in teorija baroka

Ključne besede: *estetika, filozofija kulture, barok, globoka struktura*

Esej se ukvarja z izzivi, ki jih zastavlja definicija baroka kot modela za razmišljanje o načinih, na katere lahko problemi v estetski zgodovini oblikujejo filozofijo kulture. Poskusi, da bi barok definirali kot obdobje znotraj umetnostne zgodovine, so vodili v osupljivo stopnjo zmede. Iskanje združevalnih stilističnih označevalcev sredi te zmešnjave je kritike vodilo k iskanju globokih struktur, medtem ko zgodovinske analize globokih struktur ne morejo podkrepiti njihovih povezav s stilom ali formo. Izhajajoč iz baroka kot modela to besedilo na primerih iz vizualnih umetnosti in arhitekture opozarja na načine, na katere teorije kulture z globoko strukturo omahujejo, ko predpostavljajo, da so razlike med površino in globino ostrejše, kot v resnici so. Deloma sledeč Deleuzovemu pojmu gube besedilo predlaga, da na kulturo gledamo, kot da jo vodijo sile, ki se materializirajo v površinah, ki so same del vsakršne »globoke strukture«.

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Heinz Paetzold

Walter Benjamin and the Urban Labyrinth

Key words: *aesthetics, philosophy of culture, architecture, urbanism*

The author proposes a new reading of Walter Benjamin's city centred cultural theorizings laid down especially in his seminal »Arcades Project«. Two basic concepts of Benjamin's are singled out: Flânerie and labyrinth. Although Benjamin derived his theory of urban culture form 19th century Paris both the concepts are not enshrined in this realm, but have a relevance for our time as well.

Heinz Paetzold

Walter Benjamin in urbani labirint

Ključne besede: *estetika, filozofija kulture, arhitektura, urbanizem*

Avtor predlaga novo branje na mesto osrediščenih kulturnih teoretizacij, ki jih je Walter Benjamin prikazal predvsem v svojem pomembnem projektu »arkade«. Izpostavljena sta dva osnovna Benjaminova pojma: flânerie in labirint. Čeprav je Benjamin svojo teorijo urbane kulture izpeljal iz Pariza devetnajstega stoletja, njegova pojma nista omejena na to področje, temveč sta pomembna tudi za naš čas.

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Ernest Ženko

Art and Culture in the Works of Fredric Jameson

Key words: *aesthetics, philosophy of culture, Fredric Jameson, G. W. F. Hegel*

In the first part of the article the author introduces Fredric Jameson as a central figure in contemporary theoretical thought and cultural debates within the Unites States, pointing out the relatively scarce critical attention he has received in Western Europe and some problematic aspects of his thought from the Third World viewpoint. In the second part Jameson's major works and intentions are presented, with the focus being on his writings on art and culture. In the third part Jameson's return to Hegel's philosophy is discussed, and its consequences for art, culture, philosophy and theory are presented. Finally, the critical role of art within postmodern society is examined, and the question of the »correct form of art« is raised.

Ernest Ženko

Umetnost in kultura v delih Fredrica Jamesona

Ključne besede: *estetika, filozofija kulture, Fredric Jameson, G. W. F. Hegel*

V prvem delu članka avtor predstavi Fredrica Jamesona kot osrednjo figuro sodobne teoretske misli in kulturnih razprav v ZDA, pri čemer izpostavi relativno majhno kritično pozornost, katere je bil deležen v zahodni Evropi ter nekatere problematične vidike njegove misli s stališča tretjega sveta. V drugem delu so predstavljena Jamesonova bistvena dela in njegove namere, s poudarkom na besedilih o umetnosti in kulturi. Tretji del uvaja razpravo o Jamesonovi vrnitvi k Heglovi filozofiji ter posledicah, ki jih ima le-ta za umetnost, kulturo, filozofijo in teorijo. Na koncu avtor obravnava še kritično vlogo umetnosti v postmoderni družbi in zastavlja vprašanje o »pravi obliki umetnosti«.

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Jianping Gao

The Original Meaning of the Chinese Character for »Beauty«

Key words: *aesthetics, philosophy of culture, Chinese culture, beauty*

A Chinese character is an ideogram that represents people's idea of a thing, rather than the pronunciation of a word for the thing. Attracted by this fact, many Chinese have been trying to trace the original meaning of the Chinese character for beauty, so as to shed light on today's research on aesthetics. In this paper, the author provides an investigation of several most influential opinions on the original meaning of beauty prevailing in China, and shows why and how these opinions are incorrect or incomplete. The first opinion the author deals with is that the character for beauty is written as »big sheep«, so that the original meaning for beauty is something to do with the sense of flavor, or more precisely, the delicious. The second opinion is that the character for beauty is to »imitate a man wearing sheep horns or a sheep on his head.« Some Chinese scholars even suggested that the man was the chief or sorcerer of a primitive tribe, who was playing a ritual dance of totemism or sorcery. The third opinion is that the character looks like a man wearing feathers. After the critiques of the above three opinions, the author reaches a conclusion: the character for beauty in China was originally imitating a beautiful man. It imitated such a man simply because people thought a man was possible to be beautiful. This is the sign of the origin of their aesthetic consciousness, not for the cause of religion, nor for the cause of direct feeling of mouth or tongue.

Jianping Gao

Izvorni pomen Kitajske pismenke za »lepoto«

Ključne besede: *estetika, filozofija kulture, kitajska kultura, lepota*

Kitajska pismenka je ideogram, ki je bližje človekovi ideji stvari kot izgovorjavi besede za stvar. Očarani nad tem dejstvom, so mnogi Kitajci skušali slediti izvornemu pomenu kitajskega znaka za lepoto, da bi osvetlili sodobne raziskave v estetiki. V članku avtor raziskuje nekatera najbolj vplivna mnenja o izvornem pomenu lepote, ki so razširjena na Kitajskem ter pokaže zakaj in kako so ta napačna ali nepopolna. Prvo mnenje, s katerim se avtor ukvarja je, da je pismenka za lepoto zapisana kot »velika ovca«, tako da je izvorni pomen lepote nekako v zvezi s čutilom za okus, oz. natančneje, s slastnim. Po drugem mnenju naj bi pismenka za lepoto »posnemala človeka, ki nosi na glavi ovnove roge ali ovco«. Nekateri kitajski učenjaki so celo predlagali, da je bil ta človek poglavar ali čarovnik v primitivnem plemenu, ki je izvajal ritualni totemski ali čarovniški ples. Tretje mnenje je, da pismenka izgleda kot človek, ki nosi perje. Po kritiki teh treh navedenih mnenj, pride avtor do sklepa, da je pismenka za lepoto na Kitajskem izvorno posnemala lepega človeka. Posnemala je takšnega človeka preprosto zato, ker so ljudje menili, da je človek lahko lep. To je znak izvora njihove estetske zavesti: niti zaradi religije niti zaradi neposrednega občutka ust ali jezika.

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Eva Kit Wah Man

The Notion of »Orientalism« in the Modernization Movement of Chinese Painting of Hong Kong Artists in 1960s: The Case of Hon Chi-fun

Key words: *aesthetics, philosophy of culture, orientalism, Hong Kong culture*

The article first outlines the cultural background and situation of Chinese artists in the colonial Hong Kong in the 60's. Their frustrated claims for development and evolution of Chinese

painting and aesthetics were expressed and concluded by their representative and leader, Lu, who suggested and promoted a controversial notion of "Orientalism". Different from that of Edward Said, Lu's notion implied a modified version of nationalism. The influences and practices of Lu's theory are examined, including his oppositionals. The presentation then introduces the case of Hon Chi-fun's artistic practice. Hon illustrated a unique way of being "Oriental", both in his artistic experiments and beliefs. His case is followed by readings and analyses from the philosophical, psychological and cultural angles utilizing theories of Western and Chinese aesthetics, psychoanalysis and post-colonialism. The author discusses the problems of transnationalism and transculturalism in contemporary aesthetics from a Hong Kong experience.

Eva Kit Wah Man

Pojem orientalizma v modernizacijskem gibanju kitajskega slikarstva hongkongških umetnikov v šestdesetih: primer Hon Chi-funa

Ključne besede: *estetika, filozofija kulture, orientalizem, kultura Hong Konga*

Članek najprej oriše kulturno ozadje in položaj kitajskih umetnikov v kolonionalnem Hong Kongu v šestdesetih letih. Njihove jalove zahteve po razvoju in evoluciji kitajskega slikarstva in estetike so bile izražene in sklenjene z njihovim predstavnikom in vodjem Lujem, ki je predlagal in promoviral sporni pojem »orientalizma«. Za razliko od pojmovanja Edwarda Saida, je Lujev pojem vseboval modificirano različico nacionalizma. Avtorica predstavi vplive in prakse Lujeve teorije, vključno z njenimi nasprotniki. Članek nato predstavi primer Hon Chi-funove umetniške prakse. Tako v svojih umetniških eksperimentih kot v prepričanjih je Hon prikazal edinstven način, kako biti »orientalen«. Njegovemu primeru sledita branje in analiza s filozofskega, psihološkega in kulturnega gledišča, uporabljajoč teorije zahodne in kitajske estetike, psihoanalize in postkolonializma. Avtorica razpravlja o problemih transnacionalizma in transkulturalizma v sodobni estetiki izhajajoč iz hongkongške izkušnje.

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Estelle A. Maré and N. J. Coetzee

Altered Landscapes: A Comparison Between Works by J. H. Pierneef and John Clarke

Key words: *aesthetics, philosophy of culture, landscape painting, J. H. Pierneef, John Clarke*

The article is introduced by theoretical speculation about the »world« revealed in a work of art, followed by discussions of landscapes by the painter Jan Hendrik Pierneef (1886-1957) and place images by the printmaker John Clarke (born 1946), whose peak periods are fifty years apart, during which time the socio-political reality in South Africa changed radically. We hope to reveal that ideology influenced the representation of landscape and place in the work of these artists: Pierneef's sublime views are of a land colonised and altered by white settlers, while Clarke's views of places are marked by configurations of stones and stockades which were assembled by indigenous people. The works of both artists are nostalgic in different ways in that a longing for some idealised vision of a multi-ethnic and multicultural land with conflicting traditions imbues their representations.

Estelle A. Maré in N. J. Coetzee

Spremenjene krajine: primerjava del J. H. Pierneefa in Johna Clarka

Ključne besede: *estetika, filozofija kulture, krajinsko slikarstvo, J. H. Pierneef, John Clarke*

Članek se začenja s teoretsko spekulacijo o »svetu«, razodetem v umetniškem delu, sledi pa ji razprava o krajinah slikarja Jana Hendrika Pierneefa (1886–1957) in podobah krajev grafika Johna Clarka (rojen 1946). Vrhunca njunih karier sta petdeset let narazen, v tem času pa se je družbenopolitična dejanskost v Južnoafriški republiki radikalno spremenila. Avtorja upava, da bova pokazala, kako je ideologija vplivala na reprezentacijo krajine in kraja v delih teh dveh umetnikov: Pierneefovi sublimni pogledi kažejo deželo, kolonizirano in spremenjeno s strani belih priseljencev, medtem ko so Clarkovi pogledi krajev zazanamovani s konfiguracijami kamnov in ograd, ki so jih sestavili prvotni prebivalci. Dela obeh umetnikov so na različne načine nostalgična, ko izražajo hrepenenje po neki idealizirani podobi multietnične in multikulturalne dežele z različnimi tradicijami, ki navdihuje njune reprezentacije.

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Lev Kreft

Art and Nation-State

Key words: *aesthetics, philosophy of culture, nation state, democracy*

Even in new theories of nation which claim that nations were invented in modern times by the intellectuals we still find some foundations for making the difference between »real« and »artificial« nations. This binarism usually introduces the »People« nations of the modernist first-comers, and »Volk« nations of all the others, as in »The Federalist Papers« introduction of representative democracy, and in Herder's »Ideas on the Philosophy of History of the Mankind«. In both cases, national art is treated as an artificial constructive pillar of the Nation and Nation-State. Comparing the case of Slovenia (the nation-founding story of »Martin Krpan« by Fran Levstik from 1858) with the cases of Greece as »the Dream Nation« and of new African nations, the author concludes that nations are not fictitious inventions of the intellectuals but necessary products of history, and that in their production art had an important position due to its aesthetic function. This function makes possible to bridge and to universalize on a territory without any certain grounds and limits, across the gap of any modernist binarism.

Lev Kreft

Umetnost in nacionalna država

Ključne besede: *estetika, filozofija kulture, nacionalna država, demokracija*

Tudi pri novih teorijah nacije, ki trdijo, da so moderni narodi izum intelektualcev, še ostaja vidno razlikovanje med »pravimi« in »umetnimi« narodi. Ta binarizem običajno navaja razliko med nacijo, utemeljeno v ljudstvu, in nacijo, utemeljeno v narodu, tako kot med argumentacijo za nacionalno državo v ameriških »The Federalist Papers« in Herderjevimi idejami o zgodovini človeštva. Umetnost pa v obeh primerih predstavlja institucionalizirano podporo naciji in nacionalni državi. S primerjavo slovenskega primera (Levstikov »Martin Krpan«) z grškim primerom »sanjskega naroda« in z novimi afriškimi nacijami pridemo do zaključka, da narodi niso izmišljeni izumi intelektualcev, ampak proizvodi zgodovinske nuje, in da je pri proizvodnji nacij umetnost imela pomembno vlogo predvsem zaradi svoje estetske funkcije. Ta omogoča premostitev in zaokrožitev na terenu, kjer ni utrjenih podlag in meja, in takšen je teren modernističnih binarizmov.

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1. Gilles-Gaston Granger, *Pour la connaissance philosophique,* Odile Jacob, Paris 1988, str. 57.
2. *Cf.* Charles Taylor, »Rationality«, v: M. Hollis, S. Lukes (ur.), *Rationality and Relativism,* Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1983, str. 87-105.
3. Granger, *op. cit.*, str. 31.
4. *Ibid.*, str. 49.
5. Friedrich Rapp, »Observational Data and Scientific Progress«, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science,* Oxford, 11 (2/1980), str. 153.

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