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Hegel: the beginning of aesthetic theory and the end of art

Which Hegel?

Hegel's work has come in recent years to exemplify many of the choices facing contemporary philosophy. The changed status of Hegel can, though, seem rather odd, given the labyrinthine nature of his texts, the huge divergences between his interpreters from his own time until today, and the fact that some of the philosophers who now invoke him come from an analytical tradition noted for its insistence on a clarity not always encountered in Hegel himself. Even contemporary interpreters range between those who still pursue his grand aims by trying to show how he offers a systematic answer to the major problems of modern philosophy, and those, like Robert Brandom and John McDowell, who are now mobilising his arguments in order to escape from some of the epistemological impasses in the analytical tradition. Most histories of German Idealism see Hegel as making the vital steps towards a complete systematic philosophy which goes beyond the limitations of Fichte and Schelling (for example, Kroner 1924). More recently it has been precisely this aim of completeness that makes Hegel the target of philosophers whose aim is to deconstruct such pretension, as part of the wider attempt to overcome 'Western metaphysics'. In the preceding chapters I have tried to show that there always has been something of a 'deconstructive' tendency in modern philosophy, though it is generally one which seeks to elaborate new conceptions of subjectivity, not completely to obviate the role of the subject. In the present context it is important to keep the focus on the significance of aesthetics in Hegel's work, but it will soon be obvious that, as we have seen in relation to the other thinkers we have looked at, this focus will force us into a broader interrogation of his philosophical claims. The issue with which we shall be concerned is how Hegel's account of art's relationship to philosophy is to be assessed, given its reliance on assumptions which go to the heart of his philosophical project.

Hegel's work on aesthetics has two main aspects. On the one hand, he produced the most influential systematic aesthetics of the nineteenth century; on the other, he announced the 'end of art' as an expression of the 'absolute' in modernity. Hegel wants to make philosophy into the complete articulation of

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what he thinks is only incompletely expressed in art and religion, the preceding forms of 'absolute spirit'.[1] What he means by this term can be understood in relation to the notion of 'objective spirit', the preceding, less developed form of *Geist* in his overall system. 'Objective spirit' is the realm which encompasses the history of attempts to overcome contradictions between the individual, the family and the state, which are manifest, for example, in forms of production and exchange, and in the legal forms which regulate the distribution and ownership of property. 'Absolute spirit', on the other hand, is supposedly not encumbered by the demands of technical and practical reason, and allows thought to be self-determining. The notion will become clearer when we see how Hegel creates a hierarchy of the arts on the basis of their increasing emancipation from the need for physical embodiment, the highest art being the most self-determining manifestation of *Geist*, namely literature (in the form of comedy). Interpreting exactly what Hegel means by his conception of philosophy is, though, far from easy. One of the major difficulties is that his work comes as a package: you cannot simply take bits of his system, because the whole point of his thought is that if you adopt one bit you are forced to adopt the rest, the two being inextricably connected. Objections to Hegel are consequently often rejected by Hegelians on the grounds that some other part of the system will be able to cater for the objection. The result is a situation where all you seem able to do is enter the textual labyrinth called 'Hegel', on the assumption that it has a centre. You cannot, of course, *know* in advance whether this is really the case, otherwise the enterprise would be pointless: you have to assume it as an act of faith. It is arguable that Hegel himself assumes such a centre and then sets about showing us the way to it.

Recent interpretations of Hegel have tended to focus on translating his apparently hyperbolic contentions into arguments which show that he can be part of contemporary philosophy, rather than the megalomaniac nineteenth-century representative of what Adorno termed 'the stomach become spirit'. Whatever one makes of these interpretations, aspects of which I will touch on, it does seem clear that philosophy for Hegel, as it did for the other Idealists, is to show how thought and being are inseparable. This makes them 'identical' in Hegel's particular sense, so Kantian worries about knowledge being only of the way the world appears to us, rather than of things in themselves, are eliminated. The question is *how* this identity is to be revealed and what exactly is meant by the way it is revealed.

The early Schelling claimed that art overcame the division between thought and its ground by revealing how the 'unconscious productivity' of nature required for there to be thought at all could be combined with the 'conscious productivity' involved in philosophical and other reflection. Hegel confronts in a new way the problem of how mind and world relate. As Fichte argued, if the I is wholly opposed to something else – the world, the object, matter, things in themselves – Kant's problems must remain unsolved, leaving us with separate worlds of freedom and necessity. We have already considered various attempts

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to solve Kantian problems. Few of these are entirely free either of implausible idealism, of the kind present in Fichte's absolutising of the I, or of a reversion to dogmatism, as in certain aspects of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*. Only the early Romantics offer a perspective which potentially skirts the traps of strong foundationalism. What is Hegel's contribution to these attempts?

Before dealing with some of the detail of Hegel's texts, let us briefly consider one of the contemporary approaches to Hegel. This should make the issues clearer and will suggest how the more immanent discussion which follows can be related to present-day debates. Terry Pinkard epitomises the deflationary interpretation of Hegel in the following description of what he thinks absolute spirit means: 'the human community comes to an awareness that it is in working out the internal requirements of its own reason-giving activity that it sets for itself what is to count for it as its absolute principles' (Pinkard 1994 p. 254). Like Robert Pippin, Pinkard, regards Hegel as the most important thinker of a self-legislating modernity. In this interpretation, *Geist*, the immanently developed thought of a community, is absolute because there is no longer any possibility of appealing to a transcendent authority. Communities must have recourse to intersubjective agreement without invoking anything outside what they can work out within their own institutions. Hegel's idea of thought's 'self-determination' need not, then, be read as though there were an immanent driving force of rationality, called *Geist*, which forces us to acknowledge that the 'real is the rational'. The idea instead designates the recognition on our part that, as Pippin puts it, 'we always require . . . a narrative account of why we have come to regard some set of rules or a practice as authoritative' (Pippin 1999 p. 68). The idea of all-inclusive immanence therefore no longer forces one to invoke obscure notions like the 'self-determination of the concept', because what is at stake amounts to nothing more than the fact that legitimation of all kinds in modernity has to include reflection on the sources of our decisive notions in the concrete history of a human community. The task of philosophy is to show that there is a wider development of rationality in modernity, evident, for example, in things which have become impossible to justify, like slavery and the oppression of women. The impossibility of now finding an intersubjective justification for such things is the final court of appeal, but this court does not have transcendent authority, and its justifications can always be revised in terms of a better, more inclusive, narrative of legitimation.

Habermas has objected to this deflationary account of Hegel by pointing out that

> Even from the point of view of a completely inclusive community there is an *unmediated* difference between the social world which we share intersubjectively and the objective world with which we are confronted and have to cope. Just as little can, secondly, the tension between what is valid 'for us' and what is valid 'in and for itself' be removed. What is rationally acceptable according to our lights is not necessarily the same as what is objectively true. (Habermas 1999 pp. 218–19)

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There is no way in which we can anticipate what the completion of knowledge could look like, because our knowledge is arrived at by explaining what we encounter contingently in nature and by arriving at fallible consensuses about what there is. The recent attempts to convert Hegel's conception of 'absolute knowledge' into an account of intersubjective agreement are consequently, Habermas claims, both inaccurate as an account of what Hegel could have meant and inadequate to the nature of 'post-metaphysical' rationality. The attempts are inaccurate because Hegel does lay claim to a completed *philosophical* knowledge at the end of the system, to a 'context of all contexts' (pp. 218–19), that is arrived at by explicating all the ways in which thought and its object can be in contradiction, and by then revealing how the contradictions are necessarily overcome. What is actually, in Hegel's own terms, objective spirit, in the sense of the contingent, socially-located historical manifestations of our conceptions, is, Habermas argues, taken by Hegel as absolute spirit. Hegel, then, ignores the genesis of spirit in specific historical contexts and therefore regards it as thought's own complete self-understanding. The attempts are inadequate to the 'post-metaphysical' situation because they conflate fallible rational acceptability in an all-inclusive community with the regulative idea of absolute validity. For Habermas this regulative idea arises from the 'cooperative search for truth' (p. 221) of historically contingent individuals who seek to transcend their contingency by extending the contexts of their knowledge, even though they can never know if anything is absolutely valid: 'nothing gives us the right to expect that we will have the last word' (p. 209). In short, the notion of consensus alone fails to take account of the absolute conception of truth which transcends all particular contexts. Habermas regards the absolute conception of truth as an essentially normative, not a substantive notion, and argues that Hegel lays claim to it in an invalid manner by blurring the line between absolute and objective spirit, in order to incorporate the transcendence of truth into his immanent conception.

How, then, do these conflicting approaches to Hegel relate to what we have investigated so far? As we saw in Chapter 3, the early Romantics' response to the question of absolute truth was precisely to make it a regulative idea which was a reminder of the finitude of our thought. This conception led them to link truth to art, because art manifested that reminder in a way which could always lead to new and unexpected insights, whereas systematic philosophy attempted to 'foreclose' something which, given our finitude, must necessarily remain open. Interpreting this position led to difficulties in deciding whether it entails a version of metaphysical realism, or whether the turn to the aesthetic was not rather a pointer both to the limitations of positions too concerned with epistemology at the expense of other relations to the world, and to the aporias of the correspondence theory of truth. Schlegel's comments that 'In truth you would be distressed if the whole world, as you demand, were for once seriously to become completely comprehensible' (Schlegel 1988 2 p. 240), and 'If absolute truth were found then the business of spirit would be completed and it would

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have to cease to be, since it only exists in activity' (Schlegel 1991 p. 93) suggested an aesthetic awareness that the very fallibility of our approaches to truth may actually be a way of avoiding nihilism. The awareness of fallibility sustains the motivating goal of attempting to create ever more inclusive forms of understanding. It is, though, possible from another point of view to regard this fallibility as itself leading to a sceptical nihilism, given that something which is endlessly deferred can be seen as irrelevant to what we actually do in the world.[2] The basic difficulty here is suggested in Schlegel's assertion that 'For a positive *criterion of truth* the *truth itself* would have already to be present and *be given* – which is therefore a contradiction' (Schlegel 1971 p. 58). If the criterion cannot be said to be present, does that mean that we have no ultimate way of claiming anything is true, or at least of understanding what we might mean by truth's transcendence of all finite justifications? This is the problem Hegel wishes to resolve and it still forms the focus of many of the major debates in contemporary philosophy.

It is clear that Hegel's position is a response to the sceptical option, and this pushes one in the direction of a decision on Habermas's contentions about what Hegel meant. Hegel responds to scepticism by arguing that the complete, 'nihilistic' destruction of all particular theories does not lead to a negative conclusion, but instead to the highest, most universal philosophical insight. This is because all theories have to begin by opposing some existing position, which they therefore need to negate for their own positive conclusions to emerge – no Galileo without Ptolemy. We can never *begin* with a foundational theory, because this leads to a regress of justifications, so we must establish the absolute justification at the *end*. As the conclusions of theories which negate previous theories are then themselves negated in turn, the question becomes whether there is a position which eventually overcomes this process by showing that there is nothing left to negate. For Hegel this position is precisely that of absolute spirit, because it makes us aware of the inherent relativity of particular truth claims, having immanently reconstructed all the possible forms in which things can be articulated. In one respect, then, he comes close to Kant's attempt to delineate the categories in the transcendental deduction, though his method is clearly different. Hegel thinks one can eventually map the relations between each form of thought because they all result from the contradictions in previous forms. The apparently foundational thought of 'being' is really only determinate in relation to 'nothing', and this results in the notion of 'something', a kind of being which both is and is not, because it is itself only relative to other somethings which it is not. This negation of the apparent foundation gives rise to an account of what sorts of something there can be, which are made determinate by their relations to the somethings they are not, and so on.[3]

The most basic contradiction would, of course, appear to be between thought and being. Hegel aims to show that this contradiction is overcome by the very fact that our thinking has to move beyond the indeterminate thought of being to become thought in any meaningful sense at all. The movement of thought

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through all the subsequent contradictions reveals that the initial thought is not foundational in the normal philosophical sense of being the basis which supports everything else. The initial thought is merely a passing stage in the real self-description of thought, and the movement is completed when the initial contradiction finally leads to a systematic account of all the relationships in thought. The essential idea therefore comes at the *end*, and the beginning is merely something indeterminate which must be overcome if thought is to have any determinate content. Whether this squares with Pinkard's 'communitarian' immanent reading is open to question. Pinkard says the absolute idea is 'the normative self-correcting structure of a rational form of *modern* "social space", and forms the "pure normative structure" of the patterns of reciprocal recognition that make up modern mind, *Geist*' (ed. Ameriks 2000 p. 177). While I think his reading offers a valuable way of keeping Hegelian issues alive with regard to the need for philosophy to sustain a public culture of the justification of norms, it tends, as Habermas's objection to the elision of absolute and objective spirit suggests, to obscure some of the more questionable ways Hegel has affected the course of modern philosophy.[4]

The basic question here is how one interprets Hegel's attempt to show that there is in principle nothing outside what can be articulated in a publicly accessible manner. In this view any form of articulation which appears to suggest the limits of philosophy's normatively governed justifications is therefore merely a form of 'immediacy' which can be overcome. It is, of course, in relation to art that this model is most controversial, because it leads to the claim that what is perhaps most characteristic of art in modernity, its 'infinite interpretability', is also precisely what diminishes its philosophical status. This is because art supposedly retains a moment of immediacy, via its being manifest in an empirical object or telling a concrete story about individuals, which philosophy transcends through its universality. At this point we encounter the crucial division within German Idealism. This division becomes paradigmatic for two major directions in modern philosophy, the one pointing to how the sciences take over from both art and philosophy in defining the nature of the modern world, the other questioning, in the name of art, the domination by the sciences of our relations to the world. The underlying question here is the one which has concerned us in the preceding chapters: how does what philosophy can say about art relate to what art may say that cannot be articulated by philosophy?

As we have already seen, aspects of this latter position are developed in the early Schelling. Even though he later no longer makes art central to philosophy, the questions which led him to his early position keep recurring in his work. Schelling's philosophy retains in varying ways, and continues to do so until his later work, a sense that the highest principle of philosophy is not conceptually accessible. Thought's immanent self-description of its own structure does not explain how it is that there is rational thought at all, let alone account for the fact that being is disclosed in the first place (see Bowie 1993). Schelling's conception has a significant influence on attempts to explore the sources and limits

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of rationality, which means he is important both for questionable irrationalists like Nietzsche, and for thinkers like Adorno, who seek to avoid a too narrow conception of rationality by adverting to what art can tell us that philosophy cannot. The 'space of reasons' for thinkers like Adorno does not, as neo-Hegelians like Pinkard and McDowell think it must, necessarily exhaust what is of normative significance. Were it to do so, art would become, as Habermas suggests it does, just one of the spheres of modern rationality, namely the one in which the modern world articulates the aesthetic-expressive dimension of human existence. The historical legitimation for this view is clear. As Hegel argues, art is indeed no longer the essential determinant in how the modern world understands itself: it cannot play the role tragedy did for a time in the Greek polis. However, this still leaves open the question of whether art is as reducible to philosophy as Hegel suggests. His argument relies, of course, upon the success of his wider philosophical project, and the extent to which the neo-Hegelian conception relies on this success will affect how we regard its role in contemporary philosophy.

Hegel claims to achieve what Schelling does not when he argues that: 'The deficit in Schelling's philosophy is that he places the point of the indifference of subjective and objective at the beginning; this identity is set up absolutely, without it being proven that this is the truth' (Hegel 1971 III p. 435). Hegel's claim is, then, that he can articulate the unity of subject and object – rather than postulate it, as Schelling does in the idea of 'intellectual intuition' – by *explicating* the initially indeterminate content of intellectual intuition. The *System of Transcendental Idealism* argues that intellectual intuition is manifested objectively in the artwork. For Hegel, it is merely a form of undeveloped 'immediacy' which philosophy must mediate by conceptualising it. How we are to read his claim is a classic example of the difficulty of deciding which Hegel we are understanding. On the one hand, the idea of beginning without any founding presupposition which cannot be articulated as part of the system seems to bring him into the fold of a pragmatic 'space of reasons' approach, for which philosophical issues are negotiated within communities without appeals to transcendence. On the other hand, the claim in the *Logic* that he can explicate, by the method described above, the overall structure of the truth which emerges from the splitting up of the immediate contact of thought and being seems to take us in the direction of the absolutisation of objective spirit. I do not wish to adjudicate on this matter here, and my real aim is to explore it in relation to Hegel's account of aesthetics. The difference we are concerned with is, then, between philosophies which retain the conviction that the Cartesian separation of thought and being is untenable, but which never fully square the circle by demonstrating how this is so in an immanent account of their relationship, and a philosophy which claims to have means to solve the problem by articulating it in a new kind of conceptuality. This difference, as the contrast between Idealist and Romantic aesthetics suggested, is often manifested in the differing approaches to art of such philosophies.

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Self-recognition

Hegel's position becomes easier to understand if one sees it in its historical context. The turn to the subject in modern philosophy parallels the development of modern individualism and is essential for the development of aesthetics. Habermas suggests the main contradiction involved in this development, which German Idealism tries to overcome: 'subjectivity reveals itself as a *one-sided* principle. It admittedly possesses the unprecedented power to produce a development of subjective freedom and subjective reflection . . . but it is not powerful enough to regenerate the religious power of unification via the medium of reason' (Habermas 1987 p. 31). Whereas religion and mythology give an a priori basis for action and reflection, which is necessarily shared by others, a culture grounded in the individual's freedom to think and act self-interestedly must necessarily generate new kinds of conflict. Who or what legislates on the issue of whether my freedom is not your enslavement? The power of Hegel's philosophy lies, as Pinkard suggests, in its demonstration of the need for mutual recognition as the ground of normativity in the modern world. Habermas puts this as follows: 'The experience of self-consciousness . . . results for Hegel from the experience of the interaction in which I learn to see myself with the eyes of the other subject . . . only on the basis of mutual recognition does self-consciousness develop, which must be anchored in the reflection of my consciousness in the consciousness of another subject' (Habermas 1974 p. 789). Here we arrive once again at a familiar issue, which goes to the heart of the most ambitious side of Hegel's project and of its employment in contemporary philosophy: Hegel relies on the structure of reflection, about which some of the thinkers we have already considered raised serious doubts. Quite simply, is the reflection of my consciousness in the other a sufficient criterion of self-consciousness? Hegel's claim is that it is only as reflected in the other that I become myself. But in what sense am I myself if my self-knowledge derives from what is not myself? The assumption must be that my immediate consciousness, which must already be in existence if it is to be reflected, only becomes its *true* self via the other. However, this does not give me the criterion by which I know it is *myself* that is being reflected. If the 'mirror' in question is a shared language, then self-reflection will come about via the ability to use the signifier I. As the recent philosophy of mind has shown, though, this form of self-knowledge relies upon a *non*-propositional form of self-knowledge if I am to know that the predicates ascribed to the referent of 'I' are to be ascribed to *myself*. Dieter Henrich argues that 'Hegel conceives the unity of opposites only dialectically, in terms of what results from their opposition. However, the phenomenon of the Self requires that this unity be interpreted as original and primordial' (Henrich 1982 p. 52), otherwise the I loses the immediate basis of self-knowledge which is the prior condition of reflexive self-awareness.

Clearly Hegel's overall conception cannot be dismissed simply on the basis of this argument. The importance of his conception is evident when it is

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employed as a way of legitimating legal structures which rely on mutual acknowledgement for the establishing of rights, in relation to claims about myself which I must make to others in a common language, or in the experience of love, where self-transcendence comes about by the acknowledgement of the essential role of the other in who I become (though this may not be as harmonious as a Hegelian conception can suggest). However, as we saw, there are dimensions of self-knowledge which cannot be construed in terms of the reflexive structure, of the kind we examined in previous chapters in relation to the notion of 'feeling'. If this is right, Hegel's model could lead to an account of the modern subject which fails to come to terms with one of its most essential dimensions, namely its irreducible individuality. In the view which argues for the limits of the reflection model it is precisely the ontological gap between myself and the other inherent in the fact of immediate self-consciousness which gives rise to the need for new forms of articulation and expression. While these forms are intersubjectively constituted – Beethoven uses many of the musical conventions of his time – they can yet be employed in unique, individual ways.

Let us see, then, how Hegel arrives at his position. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*PG*) (1807) is an account of the stages of this process of 'self-recognition in the other'. It follows the developmental model of the *STI*, but aims to show how the structure of reflection can be revealed to be present in the development of thought from its lowest to its highest stages. In the *PG* self-consciousness is revealed not to be the prior principle it is in Descartes or the early Fichte. Self-consciousness can only come about for Hegel via that which it is not: another self-consciousness. Without the other, I would remain in a state of unreflecting immediacy, like an embryo that never becomes a person. In reflection I can come to realise that consciousness only develops via its relationship to what it shares with others. Self-consciousness therefore depends upon self-*objectification*, the negation of itself as subjective, inward 'Cartesian' awareness. Only by self-*division*, by relating both to the object world and to the thinking of others (which is therefore in one sense not *my* thinking) can I achieve real awareness of myself. Consciousness itself *is* precisely this process of division: it is what it is via what it is not. This argument can help explain why Hegel has begun to come back into recent Anglo-American philosophy. His conception is, for example, in some respects congruent with an 'externalist' semantics, for which 'the content of sentences (and, derivatively, the content of beliefs and other language-dependent psychological conditions) is at least partly dependent on the determination of the *reference* in the particular context . . . of the terms used in the sentence, and that reference depends on factors that are external to the speaker's body and brain' (Putnam 1999 p. 119). In this way the intension of a term becomes dependent upon its extension, so the two are inseparably linked. I shall return to the issue of Hegel and language later, but for the time being it should be initially clear how his way of refusing to separate subject and object can be connected to some important current philosophical positions.

The structure of reflection, in which the subjective is only intelligible via the

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objective, and vice versa, is present in Hegel's philosophy at all levels. In Hegel's terms: 'the subjective is that which transforms itself into the objective and the objective is that which does not remain as it is but which rather makes itself subjective. One would have to show via the finite itself that it contains the contradiction in itself and makes itself infinite' (Hegel 1971 p. 435). The finite is the domain of Kant's understanding, which can only ever synthesise the contingent data of intuition, and cannot know things in themselves. In the *Encyclopedia* Hegel rejects Kant's dualism with the following argument: 'the designation of something as finite or limited contains the proof of the *real presence* of the infinite, of the unlimited . . . there can only be knowledge of the boundary insofar as the unbounded is *immanent* in consciousness.' (Hegel 1959 p. 84). Kant's *awareness* of the limits on scientific knowledge and of the need for ideas of reason to make our knowledge of nature cohere is therefore the proof that *within* thought there is more than limitation. The constant move beyond each theory to more inclusive theories means for Hegel that there is nothing in principle outside what can be thought, because the truth comes about through the continuing process of determination by negation, without which we merely have the opaque abstraction of being, about which nothing can be said. Dieter Henrich suggests that 'Hegel took the decisive step towards the thought of the 'absolute, which . . . is *Geist*, by reaching the thought of something finite that is an other in relation to itself' (Henrich 1982 p. 155). The phrase 'constant change' captures the essence of Hegel's argument. Gadamer puts it very aptly: 'What remains, what is real, is namely the fact that everything continually disappears . . . constancy is, then, no longer the simple opposite of disappearing, but rather is itself the truth of disappearance' (eds Fulda and Henrich 1973 p. 113).

Hegel characterises Kant's notion of the understanding as follows: 'If the determinations of thought are attached to a fixed opposition, i.e. if they are only of a *finite* kind, then they are inappropriate to the truth which is absolutely in and for itself. . . . Thought which only produces *finite* determinations and moves within such is called *understanding*' (Hegel 1959 p. 58). Reason is therefore constituted by our awareness of this limitation, which, of course, requires the limitation for it to be able to emerge as its dialectical counterpart. Henrich usefully describes the basic structure here: 'The absolute is . . . the finite insofar as the finite is nothing but the continual process of self-negation [*Sich-selbst-Aufheben* which has Hegel's threefold sense of negate, preserve, and elevate]' (Henrich 1982 p. 160). Hegel wants to prove that finite appearance, *properly understood*, is in fact the essence of reality. The notion of a 'thing in itself' apart from appearances is therefore *empty* and actually requires a complex philosophical reflection for the notion to result at all: 'The thing *in itself* . . . expresses the object inasfar as one *abstracts* from it everything that it is for consciousness, from all determination of feeling as well as all distinct thoughts of the object. It is easy to see what is left, – the *total abstraction*, total *emptiness*' (Hegel 1959 p. 69).

The *PG* sums up how appearance can be essence: 'Appearance is the coming

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into being and passing away which itself does not come into being and pass away, but is rather in itself and constitutes the reality and movement of the life of truth' (Hegel 1970 p. 416). The example of the plant Hegel uses in the preface illustrates what he means. Each stage of the plant, from seed to flower and back, negates, destroys the previous stage, but without the previous stage the subsequent stage could not become itself. The sequence of appearances that makes up the plant is equally a sequence of disappearances. Hegel's philosophy presents the essence of the plant (reality) as being a process in which each stage destroys the previous stage but in which the whole of this process constitutes the 'concept' of the plant, rather than just a particular stage, such as the flower, where it might be thought to be most itself. Without all the stages which enable it, there would be no flowering of the plant, so any account of the developmental nature of reality must incorporate this kind of necessity. The same idea applies to philosophy: Kant needs Leibnizian metaphysics even as he refutes and transcends it, and Hegel needs Kant as the other of himself. There seems, of course, to be no need for philosophers after Hegel. This either means that he can be regarded as bringing philosophy to an end or that subsequent philosophers will merely echo his principles, which is why Hegel these days is read at the same time as the inaugurator of post-metaphysical thinking and as a metaphysical system-builder.

The *overall* movement Hegel describes is only explicable via that which it is not, so the 'Idea', the whole plant from its emergence to its decline, is not subject to the same movement as the series of appearances of the plant, but is yet inseparable from them. Hegel's thinking is in this respect, as Henrich puts it, 'a dynamised Platonism' (Henrich 1982 p. 190). It rejects the idea that there is truth in the transient, sensuous world which does not have to relate to its other, the eternal:

> If . . . the Idea should not have the value of truth because it is *transcendent* in relation to appearances, because no object in the sensuous world that corresponds to it can be given, this is a peculiar misunderstanding via which the Idea is not granted objective validity because it lacks that which constitutes appearance, the *untrue being* of the objective world. (Hegel 1969 II p. 463)

Hegel can, like Schelling, be seen as arguing that the contingency of the material in which something is instantiated means the essence of that thing is what gives it its dynamic structure and intelligibility, not its passing manifestations. In the present context, though, the decisive issue is the claim that appearance is the 'untrue being' of the objective world. What does this mean for Hegel's conception of art?

Hegel argues that art can only be the 'sensuous *appearing* of the Idea', and not, as it was in the *STI*, the organ of philosophy. As the idea of 'dynamised Platonism' suggests, the goal of philosophy is the explication of the Idea, the 'true being' of the appearances of the objective world, so the Idea entails the move beyond the contingencies of particular things. The Idea is at the same time

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inseparable from the appearances in so far as they, via their necessary self-negation, are required for its self-manifestation. The aim of Hegel's *Logic* is to work out the inherent contradictions in the notions we need for thinking at all, in order to characterise all possible modes of thought independently of the particular empirical content they can articulate. This leads Hegel to the following statement, which has troubled his interpreters ever since: 'The logic is accordingly to be grasped as the system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought. *This realm is truth as it is without veil in and for itself*. One can therefore say that this content is the *representation [Darstellung] of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and a finite mind*' (1969 I p. 44).

The *Logic* is therefore a description of thought which has no need to go through the historical stages of thought's development in relation to nature. This means that the pure forms of thought must in some sense precede both nature and history. Hegel's conception can, it seems to me, only be productively understood in terms of his rejection of the idea that the empirical world can provide the criteria for truth. Most charitably, it can be seen as a version of the rejection of what Wilfrid Sellars calls, in a famous essay which refers to Hegel's criticism of immediacy on its first page, the 'myth of the given' (Sellars 1997), the idea that sense data are an immediate, non-inferential foundation of certainty which are the ultimate court of appeal in epistemological matters. What causes the real trouble in interpreting claims of the *Logic* is the relationship between the *Phenomenology*'s closely argued and *historically* based account of the genesis of the essential modes of thinking through the working out of contradictions in the historical forms of thought in society, and the *Logic*'s use of a similar method which does not refer to history as such and makes such claims as the one just cited.[5] It is not evident to me that Hegel himself was wholly clear about this relationship. We are therefore left with a tension, which has influenced Hegel's effect on modern thought ever since, between his radically modern sense of thought as being reliant solely on our social practices and their intersubjective justification, rather than on some form of immediate empirical access to the truth, and his systematic urge, which points back to earlier forms of metaphysics as the expression of the *universalia ante rem*.

The *Encyclopedia* puts the division of philosophy in the following order: 'I *Logic*, the science of the Idea in and for itself, II *Naturphilosophie* as the science of the Idea in its being other, III *Philosophy of Geist* as the Idea which returns to itself from being other' (Hegel 1959 p. 51). Again, interpretation of this is controversial, but it seems clear that this is a form of Idealism which regards the truth as beyond the contingency of material nature and history, and, above all, as being accessible to a self-correcting mode of thinking of the kind explicated in the *Logic*. The *Logic* relies on the following assumption: so far in the history of thought every approach to truth has revealed itself to be relative and transitory. In consequence, the establishing of an account of the *absolute* cannot be another version of the attempt to fix an absolute principle, but will instead make relativity, the movement of negation, the source of the accessibility of the

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absolute. While the process of revealing this is temporal, what is arrived at when the Idea is reached is not: '*Geist* appears necessarily in time . . . it appears in time as long as it does not *grasp* its pure concept, i.e. does not abolish time' (Hegel 1970 p. 584). Nothing transient or empirical can lead us to the absolute, which is the final mediation of the initial immediate, opaque concept of being: '*Being* has achieved the significance of *truth* when the idea is the unity of the concept and reality; it *is* then only what the Idea is. Finite things are finite inasmuch as they do not completely have the reality of their concept in themselves, but need other finite things to have it' (Hegel 1969 II p. 465).

The proximity to Schelling's identity philosophy is clear: this is a version of the Spinozist principle of the dependence of the particular upon other particulars *ad infinitum* for its identity. Spinoza argues that mathematical infinities, such as the infinity of points contained in a finite geometrical figure, which mutually define each other by their not being all the other points, are determinate, rather than indeterminate in the manner of an infinite number expressed by n + 1. In an analogous manner, Hegel insists that the dependence of things on other things for their identity does not lead to an infinite regress and so to an absolute which it is beyond philosophy's capacity to articulate. Instead the absolute for Hegel is present in the movement of articulation itself. The infinite is the finite's self-negation, not an endless progression or regression. The geometrical points which become themselves via their fully determinable relations to the infinity of other points in the figure suggest the structure upon which he relies. The presentation of the *Logic* must, then, avoid any ultimate dependence upon aspects of the 'finite' empirical world, as these must, in order to be thinkable at all, be secondary to the universal structures of contradiction and resolution of contradiction that make up the *Logic* itself.

Music and the Idea

Hegel's *Logic* is 'abstract' because it has to be independent of anything 'concrete' in the empirical world. Characteristically, in Hegel's terms, this actually makes it concrete, because without abstraction the truth of the concrete cannot be revealed. The apparently most concrete, the sensuous immediacy of what is in front of you as you read this sentence, is indeed 'abstract'. It omits all the complex mediations required for you to be reading it at all, such as the universally employable indexical notions of 'this' and 'here' which enable us to concretise our thought. The thought with which the *Logic* is concerned is, Hegel maintains, what enables us to reach the truth of the sensuous world:

> The *elevation* of thought above the sensuous, the *transcendence* of thought over the finite to the infinite, the *leap* which is made with the breaking off of the sequences of the sensuous into the super-sensuous, all this is thinking itself, this transcending is *only thinking*. Animals really do not make such a transition; *they* remain with sensuousness and intuition; this is why they have no religion. (Hegel 1959 p. 75)

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Art's necessary connection to sensuous particularity means it is still connected to the animal realm in a way that the highest forms of absolute spirit are not. However, the very attempt to understand the *Logic* already suggests an important problem. Thinking in pure thought must be intransitive: it must be thinking about thinking itself. If it were not, the infinite would, in order to be communicable, become dependent upon finite objects, in the manner of theological ideas which require symbols, or of Kant's 'aesthetic ideas'. These perceptible images stand for something non-concrete in the realm of ideas. Representing the infinite in thought gives rise to the difficulty that any representation limits what is to be represented, which was the whole point of Hegel's criticism of the immediacy of sensuous representation and of his stress on thought's ability to transcend the finite.

Kant's notion of the sublime offered one way of suggesting how one might 'represent' the infinite capacity of thought. In the experience of the sublime the subject negates anything sensuous precisely because of its orientation towards 'ideas of reason'. The impetus to do this is, though, occasioned by a *feeling* evoked by the sensuous. It is the *failure* of the sensuous to represent the infinite which constitutes our access to the infinite, an idea which, as we saw, is closely linked to the Romantic conception of the absolute. Hegel's attempt to transcend the sensuous is more ambitious, but gives rise to suggestive difficulties. The problem most often highlighted in the *Logic* by its critics concerns how the move is made from pure thought to nature. Schelling points to Hegel's problem in the Munich lectures cited in Chapter 4. The decision to think about thinking cannot be 'real [*wirklich*] thinking. Real thinking is that through which something opposed to thought is overcome. . . . Hegel himself describes this movement by simple abstractions, like being, becoming, etc., as a movement in pure, i.e. unresisting ether' (Schelling I/10 p. 141). Schelling uses the example of poetry as an analogy to the problem facing a philosophy of pure thought.[6] In what way are the moves in thought of the *Logic* 'real'? Poetry can, he maintains, represent a 'poetic soul in relation to and in conflict with reality. . . . But poetry can also have poetry in general and in abstracto as its object – it can be poetry about poetry' (I/10 p. 141). He cites Romantic 'poetry about poetry', claiming that 'no one has held this poetry to be real poetry' (I/10 p. 141). The idea of such Romantic poetry is, as we shall see later, closely associated with music because of its negation of referentiality. Is there, then, really a difference between the *Logic*'s status as thought about thought, and poetry about poetry?

This is not merely a rhetorical question based on a tendentious analogy: one of the ways in which Hegel himself attempts to explicate the movement of thought in the *Logic* is by the example of music, the form of art which is most obviously intransitive. Adorno often makes a link between Hegel's *Logic* and Beethoven's sonata movements, such as the first movement of the *Eroica* symphony. For Adorno the sonata movements which triumphantly resolve the contradictions they have set themselves in their opening material function in much the same way as the *Logic*. The point of the *Logic* is that it should resolve

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its own initial self-generated contradictions in order to create a self-comprehending totality. Music, on the other hand, does not necessarily aim to reveal the truth about the world, even though it may give deep insights into the nature of our being. Hegel's problem is that he must show how his self-contained construction can indeed become transitive. The complexities here are enormous, not least because of the very different ways in which the *Logic* is understood. However, it does seem clear that the *Logic* must be both self-contained and able to claim that it exhausts the ways in which the world can be articulated. This is, of course, what Hegel's opponents think leads to an unnecessary foreclosure of our possible forms of access to the world. The very fact that no serious scientist would feel the need to be aware of the *Logic*, even though there is no doubt that, as Schelling admits, many of its conceptual moves can be enormously productive, suggests that its status may have more in common with a work of art than its advocates would like to admit.

Hegel links musical harmony to his notion of the 'concept' in more than one place in his work. For Hegel, as we saw, the 'concept' includes the whole process of which it is the concept: the process and the concept are identical in his specific sense of being unable to be what they are without each other. The concept 'tree' therefore does not refer to the transient empirical object I have in front of me, nor is it my thinking of a tree when I cannot see one. Instead, the concept includes all the stages of the tree that have preceded what I might now see (as well as what will succeed these stages), *and* their reflection in my and others' thinking. Without the process of thought the object could never be revealed; indeed, the object itself would, as Kant argued, never be a determinate object at all. Seeing a tree 'as' a tree involves a consciousness that sets itself against its object, but in opposing itself to the object it also relates itself to it: the thought without the object would be empty. The concept in Hegel's sense obviously cannot be thought by an individual subject all at once, but if the concept is to be 'of' the object it must take us beyond the contingency and temporally determined nature of the particular. Hence, as we saw, his rejection of the immediate as a locus of truth, and his requirement that thinking be 'speculative', in the sense of refusing to take finite propositions about reality as definitively true. The ultimate result is that the highest concepts must be the most abstract and thus able to include all concrete particulars within themselves. How does Hegel himself link his view of the concept to music?

Hegel's argument refers to diatonic music, music in a specific key, which, though it may leave this key, will return to it. In the section of the *Logic* on 'elective affinities' (where he links music and chemistry) music is an analogy for his whole method: 'the single note [like the empirical phenomenon] has its sense only in the . . . connection with another note and with the sequence of other notes. . . . The single note is the tonic of a system but just as much again a member in the system of every other tonic' (Hegel 1969 I p. 421). The note C only becomes C by its negative relation to other notes in the key system: it is not B or D, etc. C can be the tonic of the key of C if it relates to the other notes as

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that which defines their harmonic role, but it can just as easily be the dominant of F or the subdominant of G if these are the defining note of the key. Hegel sees an analogy of this kind of relationality to the way in which elements such as carbon or hydrogen are combined in compounds. His view of how notes gain their identity is, of course, also analogous to the way a differential view of language characterises the signifier, which gains its identity via its relations to other signifiers, not by anything substantial within itself. In this conception music is therefore 'reflexive' in the sense we have seen: each element becomes what it is by needing the other elements to be itself.

In the *Aesthetics* Hegel links his idea of the 'concept' to the major triad, the basic unit of consonance in diatonic music (for example, the chord CEG). The triad expresses the 'concept of harmony in its simplest form, indeed [it expresses] the very nature of the concept. For we have a totality of different notes before us which shows this difference just as much as undisturbed unity' (Hegel 1965 II p. 296). The unity of the differing notes is a higher form of articulation than the single note's existence in isolation, an isolation which in fact does not allow it to be determinate at all. Something can only be a note, rather than a pitched frequency, via our capacity to hear it as related to other pitches. Just repeating C would be rather like saying 'Hari Krishna'; adding E and G combines difference and identity to make something whose relations establish a whole series of possibilities for transitions to new combinations of notes. The significance of diatonic music is, then, not only based on consonance, in the same way as advance in the sciences is not just based on agreement. Hegel regards musical dissonance, of the kind introduced by the dominant seventh (B flat in the key of C), as creating tension that must be resolved, and this forms the crucial link to the argument of the *Logic*.

Dissonance, Hegel asserts:

> constitutes the real depth of notes [*Tönen*] in that it also progresses to essential oppositions and is not afraid of their severity and disunity. For the true concept is admittedly unity in itself but this subjectivity negates [Hegel uses the verb *aufheben* with its triple meaning of negation, preservation and raising up] itself as ideal transparent unity into its opposite, into objectivity, indeed it is as the simply ideal itself only a one-sidedness and particularity . . . and only truly subjectivity when it goes into this opposition and overcomes and dissolves it (II p. 297).

The next stage, then, has to be the resolution of dissonance: 'Only this movement, as the return of identity to itself, is the Truth' (II p. 297). The analogy between music and the overall movement of the *Logic* is very evident here. The famous C sharp in the opening bars of the *Eroica* Symphony could, for example, be understood as 'subjectivity', in the form of the self-contained unity of the tonality of E flat, 'negating itself' into what is opposed to itself in order to articulate its own content more fully. The symphonic sonata movement finally resolves this tension by revealing its goal some 400 bars later when the C sharp recurs in the context which retrospectively gives its initial occurrence its true

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significance. In consequence, rather than having remained 'one-sidedly' within itself, the home key with which the movement eventually concludes has become deepened via its relations to what temporarily 'dissolved' it. Seen from the end of the movement, the 'negativity' of the famous dissonance thus becomes a way of expressing unity at a higher level.

The *Logic* expresses the same idea for philosophy: ultimately thought and its object are in harmony, but this can only be revealed by their opposition and reconciliation. In the same way as all the notes of the chromatic scale may appear in a symphony at some point, and at the end will become part of the path to the re-establishing of the tonic key, the divisions involved in conceptual thinking are integrated into the teleology of the Idea, a sort of ultimate harmonic resolution. The power of this conception can perhaps best be experienced in a huge symphony like Bruckner's Eighth, where the sheer length and complexity of the path to the final resolution make that resolution into the major tonic key so overwhelming. In such a conclusion all the preceding tensions become retrospectively oriented to their goal. The beginning and the end in music of this kind require each other, as they do in the *Logic*: only at these two points is the identity of subject and object complete. In the first they are united in an unarticulated, 'immediate' manner, which has to be split up to make it manifest, in the second in a fully articulated manner, once the process of contradiction resulting from the initial immediacy has been resolved by showing how it must be mediated. From an 'immediate' E flat in the opening chord of the *Eroica*, which only makes sense because it creates the expectation that more must happen to give it its sense, one moves to the end of the movement, where the contradictions that can give the initial chord its sense have been laid out and resolved.

The 'symphony' of the *Logic* culminates like this:

> The *identity* of the Idea with itself is one with the *process* [of differentiation]; the thought which frees reality [*Wirklichkeit* in the sense of empirical reality] from the appearance of purposeless changeability and transfigures it into the Idea, must not imagine this truth of reality as dead tranquillity, as just an *image*, dull without drive or movement . . . the Idea, for the sake of freedom which the concept achieves in it, also contains the *hardest contradiction* in itself; its tranquillity consists in the sureness and certainty with which it eternally creates contradiction and eternally overcomes it. (Hegel 1969 II pp. 467–8)

A theme emerges, disappears, reappears in changed form, and is finally made part of a wider movement, which ends such that the varying themes, which contrasted with and replaced each other, are seen as belonging together. A symphony does this, though, for a listener who hears the elements and feels their effect as a coherent unity. The symphony can consequently manifest affective coherence by making sense of what may initially feel merely negative.

It is not surprising therefore that in the nineteenth century the symphony began to take on many of the roles formerly filled by religious observance, offering an affective replacement for theological forms of meaning.[7] What func-

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tion can the *Logic* be seen as fulfilling in this respect? As we saw, Hegel does refer to the *Logic* in theological terms, as offering the '*representation [Darstellung] of God as he is in his eternal essence*', but who the 'listener' is supposed to be in relation to the *Logic* is unclear. Schelling says that the Idea at the end of the *Logic* is: 'subject and object, conscious of itself, as the ideal and the real, which thus has no need any more to become real any more and in any other way than it already is' (Schelling I/10 p. 152). This interpretation reinforces the sense that the *Logic* is self-contained like a symphony, which need represent no more than itself – though it can reveal new aspects of existence if employed in the right contexts by specific empirical individuals.[8] That, however, is not the ultimate intention of Hegel's text.

What seems questionable is that in the *Logic* the Idea really does seem to develop immanently in the manner of a theme in an organically integrated piece of music, where the material posited at the beginning develops a whole world out of itself. This is, of course, at the same time also part of the fascination of reading Hegel's amazing text. Schelling, however, questions why, if the development is completely immanent, the Idea needs to prove itself by, as Hegel puts it, 'releasing itself as nature' from itself: 'But for whom should the Idea prove itself? For itself? But it is that which is certain of itself . . . and knows in advance that it will not be destroyed in being other; for the Idea this struggle would be completely pointless. Should it, then, prove itself for a Third, for a spectator? But where is the spectator?' (I/10 p. 153). The essential problem is that Hegel's avoidance of a founding presupposition seems to require the conjuring away of the contingency of being, in order to allow it to be integrated into the overall system: hence the claims that being and nothing are identical, and that the Idea releases *itself* as – therefore non-contingent – nature at the end of the *Logic*. On the one hand, what Hegel is trying to do can rightly be seen as vital, as it also is for Schelling, to the project of getting away from Cartesian hang-ups about thought's contact with the world, by making it clear that such contact is inescapably part of what thought is. On the other, it is not clear that the aim of obviating scepticism-inducing splits between subject and object necessarily leads to the idea that thought can therefore use its immanent self-description to obviate contingency.

Schelling again makes the main objection clear:

> In Hegel's philosophy the beginning relates to what follows as a simple nothing, as a lack, an emptiness, which is filled and is admittedly felt as emptiness, but there is in this as little to overcome as there is in filling an empty vessel; it all happens quite peacefully – there is no opposition between being and nothing, they don't do anything to each other. (I/10 p. 137)

The tensions and contradictions of reality in Hegel *already* have within them their resolution because they can be comprehended in thought, and, as such, follow the necessities of the infinite movement of thought. Again, the parallel to music can help here: the dissonance in a symphony already has the telos of its

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resolution within it, as does Hegel's division of being and nothing. Hegel's recourse to music as part of the attempt to represent the movement of the *Logic* can, then, be seen as pointing to the crucial difficulty in his philosophy. Hegel himself takes a medium, music, which allows reconciliation in the realm of art, thus in what he regards as the realm of the sensuous manifestation of the idea, as a metaphor for the reconciliation required for the articulation of the absolute in philosophy. However, music does not positively assert what this resolution is, leaving a freedom to explore never finally determinable possibilities. This is one of the key sources of its central role in the culture of modernity. In this respect what music can be seen as gesturing towards is akin to the Romantic absolute, which serves as a reminder of the inescapable imperfection of our conceptions and as a spur to further exploration.[9]

We come here to a vital issue which affects this whole debate. Music's importance for aesthetics from this period onwards relates to its existential significance as a means of making at least temporary sense of finitude – hence its taking up of some of the roles of a declining theology. Music's existential significance depends in many ways upon its ability to articulate feelings. Crucially, though, music is also connected to conceptual developments, as the links of Beethoven's music to the *Logic* suggest. This combination of a unique ability to articulate feelings and a connection to concepts is the source of music's cultural significance. If we are to understand music, rather than merely remain at the level of unarticulated feeling in relation to it, we must therefore incorporate affective and conceptual dimensions into our understanding in ways which are not reducible to each other, and this clearly cannot be achieved from the conceptual side alone. However much we rely on the ability of words to articulate music's significance, this does not exhaust the ways in which a piece of music can be understood – think of the way, for example, that dance or the use of images can illuminate dimensions of music which words cannot. In existential terms, the aim of the *Logic* would seem to be to enable us to become reconciled with the ultimately transient nature of all determinate things, including ourselves. The reconciliation is achieved via thought's ability to grasp the necessity of that transience if the world is to develop, and this leads to a non-transient, dynamic system of linked concepts. However, despite Hegel's claim that the Idea 'contains the *hardest contradiction* in itself', it seems strange that he takes no account of the idea that the 'hardest contradiction' also includes the affective dimensions of thinking existence. What does the 'tranquillity' Hegel thinks is part of the Idea's overcoming of contradiction consist in for any real person trying to come to terms with the necessity of transience? The question here is whether music involves dimensions which are never reducible to what philosophy can say about them, and, if it does, what importance is attached to these dimensions.

Hegel himself sees music, like other art forms, as only part of the prelude to the fully transparent and articulated concept of philosophy. Because music is 'completely abstract' (Hegel 1965 II p. 261), in the sense that it does not repre-

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sent things in the world, but only expresses 'subjective inwardness', it forms a subordinate stage in the realisation of the absolute. It is therefore also a lower form of art than representational forms like drama, which connect directly to conflicts in the social world. Implicit in this conception of music is the *Logic*'s purported demonstration that being can become transparent to itself via conceptual articulation. The simple consequence is that philosophy would seem to have to be able to give the true account of what music is.

Once again we here come up against the question of how Hegel is to be understood. Take, for example, the history of modern music. At each stage of musical development there is a revision of the canon of the acceptable, which changes what can count as music. One way of understanding a Hegelian view of this would be that revisions in the theory of harmony, for example, are intrinsic to the 'concept' of harmony that is revealed at the end as the Idea of harmony. Each turn away from the established canon is contained in the Idea that emerges at the end of the process, which philosophy can articulate. What status does such a description actually have? It is clear that descriptions of this kind can indeed grasp the logic of complex musical changes in a manner which shows the often remarkable interconnectedness of apparently disparate phenomena. The development of Western harmonic thinking makes considerable sense in terms of music's increasing ability to incorporate contradiction into itself, though the advent of atonal music makes the matter more complex. However, such theoretical descriptions cannot deal with the relation of music to the dimension which Anthony Cascardi sees as decisive in Kantian aesthetics, namely its attention to 'the specific element in subjectivity that is "incapable of becoming an element of cognition"' (Cascardi 1999 p. 17) because it cannot be articulated by using the same words as everyone else. As we saw, Cascardi argued that the implication of the *Critique of Judgement* was that: 'Feeling nonetheless remains cognitive in a deeper sense [than in the sense of 'cognitive' involved in the correspondence theory of truth as correct representation of the pre-existing object]; affect possesses what Heidegger would describe . . . as "world-disclosive" power' (Cascardi 1999 pp. 50–1).

Hegel's view of music can, despite its vital insights into the development of modern art, be seen as lacking an adequate account of this world-disclosive dimension. His conception necessarily underplays the importance of a medium which does not *per se* represent conceptual ideas, but which is not devoid of meaning. I understand meaning in the present context as what is conveyed by any form of articulation that can disclose the world in ways which affect the conduct and understanding of life. If meaning is what can be understood, then music is meaningful by the very fact of its being music rather than noise. Hegel sees music as limited to 'subjective inwardness': I shall try to show in more detail below and in Chapter 7 that he therefore fails to exhaust the significance of music as a way of exploring both modern self-consciousness and the world. Although music cannot be said to possess general semantic content of the kind present in verbal language,[10] the affective and other dimensions it reveals are *not*

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merely subjective and inward, as the way music and history influence each other can suggest. In order to be able to grasp why this is the case, an account of subjectivity must countenance dimensions which Hegel's excludes or regards as of relative insignificance. Despite his undoubted insights, Hegel's insufficiency in relation to music is, then, part of his more general problem with adequately theorising self-consciousness, and thus with his aesthetic theory.

Language, consciousness and being

However much artists rely both on material that is established by their predecessors and contemporaries, and upon a pre-existing natural language, aesthetic innovation in modernity is also inseparable from individual self-consciousness. How, then, does language relate to aesthetics in the present context? As Charles Taylor has contended, from around the 1770s onwards, language moves from being understood as the symbolic means of representing pre-existing ideas and of representing already-constituted objects in the world, to being understood as 'constitutive' or 'expressive' of what becomes intelligible to us. In this latter view language reveals aspects of the world and ourselves which could not even be assumed already to exist before their articulation in language. The vital consequence is that forms of articulation which are not understood as linguistic if language is conceived of exclusively in representational terms can come to be considered as linguistic if they disclose otherwise inaccessible aspects of the world and ourselves. Language involves a tension between its capacity for schematising universalisation – what Taylor calls its 'designative' function, which makes it the essential tool of scientific research – and the fact that individuals can come to feel this very generality as an obstacle to what they wish to say, which leads to the new awareness in this period of its expressive and constitutive functions.[11] As I have tried to show, this is one of the main sources both of the changed views of music and literature, and of the changed artistic practices which emerge at this time.

In the *Phenomenology* Hegel claims that language is the 'existence (*Dasein*) of *Geist*' (Hegel 1970 p. 478), which helps suggest why his communitarian interpreters think he is so vital to contemporary debate. Elsewhere he already points to the roots of one of the divisions between semantic and hermeneutic approaches to language which is so important to philosophy today. In the *Encyclopedia* he says of language:

> Because *language* is the work [*Werk*] of thought nothing can be said in it which is not general. What I only *mean* is *mine*, belongs to me as this particular individual; but if language only expresses the general I cannot say what I *mean*. And the *unsayable*, emotion, feeling [i.e. that which is particular to me *qua* individual] is not the most excellent, the most true but rather the most insignificant, most untrue . . . if I say 'I' I mean myself as this person that excludes all others; but what I say, i.e. I, is what everyone is; I that excludes all others. (Hegel 1959 p. 56)

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Hegel's play on the word '*meinen*', which means 'to mean', what is 'mine', and 'to be of the opinion', contrasts – in Platonic fashion – 'opinion', as uncommunicable private feeling, with 'truth', which is publicly available in the language of a community. Thoughts are therefore candidates for acceptance or rejection in a community in a way feelings clearly are not until they attain a public form as utterances or performances that can be responded to positively or negatively. Hegel's position is very close to Wittgenstein's rejection of the notion of a private language which can only be understood by one person. The idea is that a language could not intelligible *as* a language in such terms, being precisely something which is intersubjective and exists in the world rather than in the head. What Hegel maintains here is congruent with the interpretation of him, by Pinkard, Brandom and others, as a philosopher concerned with the public cashing-in of discursive commitments.

Hegel's argument depends on the main structuring principle of his philosophy, the 'identity of identity and difference'. The 'sign', the 'signifier' 'I', can only attain its *meaning* via its general application as a *universal* indexical, but it is thereby also able to designate my *particular* I. Once again, however, this raises the question of reflection that we considered above. Hegel's disqualification of 'feeling', the 'unsayable', relies on the assumption that what consciousness *is* is fully explicable via the general structure of its reflection in the other of language, so that my self-knowledge is necessarily propositional and thus of the same order as others' propositional knowledge of me. To be myself in these terms, as Ernst Tugendhat (for example, Tugendhat 1979) has argued, entails knowledge on my part that another person could use any of my first person ascriptions in the second or third person and the proposition would still refer to me. In much the same way as, for Hegel, I can only be myself via the structure of self-recognition in the other, which is the basic structure of *Geist*, in the semantic model of self-knowledge, which Hegel already adumbrates, language takes over the role of *Geist* by being what permits me to individuate myself from other world objects, including other subjects. What, though, apart from my own *prior*, *non*-reflexive acquaintance with what it is to be self-conscious – which is the basis of what makes language meaningful articulation, rather than just a sequence of noises – could 'cause' me in the first place to judge that a material event occasioned by a physical object in the world is a linguistic sign produced by another subject?

There seems here, as the Romantics argued via the notion of feeling, to be a prior dimension of self-consciousness which is necessary for the very ability to understand and use the term 'I'. The mere ability to perform the social act of saying 'I' does not have to involve this pre-reflexive dimension of my awareness. It is this dimension, though, which makes this performance more than something a robot can do and therefore opens up the complex realm of ethical interaction, where the alterity of the other is a fundamental challenge, rather than just a moment of my self-reflection. Now it is generally accepted that, as Hegel argues, the truth about anything in the world must be propositional.[12] This also

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means, though, that such truth is essentially fallible, for the reasons Hegel gives in his account of the limitations of the understanding. All specific knowledge claims can, in the light of new knowledge, be re-classified under a new concept, or be described in a new vocabulary. However, self-knowledge of the kind at issue here does not have this status. Manfred Frank suggests why: 'Knowledge of myself *as* of myself does not depend on classification. But it also does not depend on identification [on ascribing a mental predicate to a singular term which stands for myself, so that 'I know that I ϕ'] – for how should I identify an object which *could* not be anything but myself?' (Frank 1991 p. 407). Frank also argues that: 'If self-consciousness cannot be characterised by the as-structure then it may no longer be described as conceptual knowledge (every concept relates indirectly – by virtue of an attribute which is common to many objects – to a content of thinking)' (1986 p. 34). It is precisely this irreducible dimension of self-consciousness which is not articulated by the words common to everybody that points to one of the reasons why aesthetics can play a disruptive role in Hegel's attempt to establish an all-inclusive philosophical system.

As we have seen, the truth of consciousness for Hegel lies in its articulation in the concept, not in the pre-reflexive moment of immediacy. For those recent philosophers, from Sellars to Brandom, who follow Hegel, the appeal of his position lies in the resources it offers for countering empiricism as the philosophy which tries to invoke a non-inferential, foundational access by the subject to the world, thus for countering the 'myth of the given'. The point about the Romantic objection to the reflexive account of self-consciousness is not, though, that there is some kind of foundational immediacy in what comes from the world as sense data, but that even our undoubted practical contact with things is only intelligible at all because of a non-inferential dimension of our self-conscious being. This dimension can only be made publicly manifest in forms such as music and gesture, which are not fully articulable by our propositional descriptions. Schleiermacher, as we shall see in Chapter 6, gives gesture a central role in his understanding of 'immediate self-consciousness', and he links gesture closely to music.

Friedrich Schlegel makes clear the difference of the Romantic position from empiricism in his *Transcendentalphilosophie* (which Hegel may well have heard as lectures in 1801). In doing so he shows that the alternative to Hegel need not be a return to scepticism-inducing empiricist assumptions: 'One has always regarded it as the greatest difficulty to get from consciousness to reality (*Daseyn*). But in our view this difficulty does not exist. *Consciousness* and *reality* appear here as the connected parts (*Glieder*) of a whole' (Schlegel 1991 p. 74). The disagreement lies in how philosophy relates to the understanding of this whole. The Romantics regard the sense of incompleteness generated both by our feeling of being's transcendence of what we can know and by our awareness of our own being's transcendence of our knowledge as the source of our continuing attempts to articulate in new ways. Elsewhere Schlegel argues, in much the same way as Hegel later will, against a strict Kantian separation of what is given

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to us from the world and what the world gives to us. This is the further main source of his conception of the whole as the necessary link between consciousness and reality:

> The *grasping* of what is given demands spontaneity, one's own exertion, own activity. The smaller is the quantity of spontaneity which the grasping of the appearance demands, the *more* the appearance appears. There are no absolute maxima on either side; without any spontaneity there is no receptivity: and if *all* receptivity stopped, then the appearance would cease to be appearance and become a concept, for pure spontaneity. (Schlegel 1988 5 p. 170)

Appearance can, of course, never do this, so a philosophical system can neither seek a foundation by explicating the mind–world/spontaneity–receptivity relationship at the beginning, nor overcome their difference by fully explicating the structures of their interaction at the end. The difference from Hegel therefore lies in the way this position leads to the aesthetic as the location of affective and other ways of being which philosophy (and science) cannot definitively explain, and which require other modes of articulation.

The kind of thinking at issue here occurs in modern philosophy among those thinkers who are concerned that exclusive focus on a cognitive account of subjectivity omits key ontological questions. Sartre argues against the Hegelian position, for example, that 'the very *being* of consciousness, being independent of cognition, pre-exists its *truth* . . . consciousness *was there* before being known' (Sartre 1943 p. 284). He illustrates the limitations of the reflexive cognitive model by the example of pleasure. Pleasure 'is not a representation, it is a concrete, full and absolute event . . . The pleasure is the being of the consciousness (of) itself and the consciousness (of) itself is the law of being of pleasure' (p. 21).[13] The development of the *concept* of pleasure which, as Hegel suggests, comes about by opposing it to its other and by its articulation in the language of a community, has as its precondition the *existence* of pleasure, which is not *reducible* to its subsequent conceptualisation, precisely because it can always be redescribed. Neither, of course, is pleasure conceived of in empiricist terms: its crucial attribute is its *meaningfulness* to the subject, not a meaningless immediacy. How, then, does this differ from Hegel?

The truth of consciousness emerges for Hegel via its reflection in universal structures. Self-consciousness is formed in social interaction, in a totality within which it can ultimately be subsumed. Because I need your consciousness to realise my own, the truth of consciousness is part of the universal structure of *Geist* which negates individual subjectivity, even though it at the same time realises itself through that subjectivity. Consciousness is thus implicitly already part of a self-reflecting whole, *Geist*, which our common capacity for thought can reveal. This idea recurs in the recent post-Wittgensteinian appropriations of Hegel, in which language, as Hegel suggests, is the 'existence of *Geist*'. In many respects this is a convincing approach to thinking about subjectivity in modernity. However, the question this approach raises with regard to aesthetics concerns the

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status of utterances or performances whose particularity, as Schelling argued, can take on a universal significance. This universality does not, though, result from art's being characterised by general concepts. The vital issue is rather how art can be of great significance in the most varied social and historical contexts. Instead of particularity being what is to be overcome by the concept it here becomes the source of a kind of significance which has its *own* form of universality. The problem in Hegel's aesthetic theory is basically that the truth of a work of art emerges most completely via its conceptual articulation, which therefore leads one beyond the art work towards philosophy. As we shall see, the hierarchy of arts in his system, in which the art closest to philosophy, literature, is given the highest status, depends on this priority of philosophy before art.

The power of Hegel's position is evident in its importance for such disciplines as the sociology of literature. Here we encounter a familiar dilemma in modern thought, which is echoed in sociological debates over whether individual actors determine social developments or whether the structures within which they act are the real determinants. Hartmut Scheible sees Hegel's achievement as making possible the analysis of the historical development of art as part of the overall development of modernity. The price for this historicisation of the truth of art is, though, that 'with the turn towards an aesthetics of conceptually fixed content the individual subject ceases to play a role in the constitution of aesthetic truth' (Scheible 1984 p. 290). Art becomes comprehensible to an unprecedented extent, but the result is both a reduction of the semantic potential of art and a repression of the subject's individuality in the name of a general understanding of the work's relationship to its context and to the development of art as a whole. The ensuing tension in aesthetic theory, which still determines contemporary debate, lies between theorists who wish to sustain the notion of art's irreducible semantic potential, and theorists who wish to subordinate art to other forms of understanding, such as philosophy, history, or the analysis of ideology.[14] A recent version of something like Hegel's position is represented by Arthur Danto (though, as we shall see, Danto is in some respects closer to the Romantics): 'For when art attains the level of self-consciousness it has come to attain in our era, the distinction between art and philosophy becomes as problematic as the distinction between reality and art. And the degree to which the appreciation of art becomes a matter of applied philosophy can hardly be overestimated' (Danto 1983 pp. 1–2).

One of the reasons for questioning Hegel's position can be illustrated by the following example. In *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat* Oliver Sacks describes the case of a patient he calls the 'autistic artist'. Sacks's patient moves from almost total non-communication to being able to express himself in drawings of natural objects which have a peculiar intensity. He does not learn to communicate linguistically. Sacks says of the autistic:

> Lacking, or indisposed to, the general [they] seem to compose their world entirely of particulars. Thus they live, not in a universe, but in what William James called a 'multiverse', of innumerable, exact and passionately intense particulars. It is a mode of

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mind at the opposite extreme from the generalising, the scientific, but still 'real', equally real, in a quite different way. (Sacks 1986 pp. 218–19)

Looked at in Hegelian terms, the truth of an autistic world is simply that of particularity which has not been transcended in order to reach its concept. The patient is caught in the particular via their lack of a means of general articulation. Sacks's point is that there are lessons to be learned from his patient. The 'autistic artist' escapes dominant attitudes to the natural world which are increasingly the norm in the Western world: he does not, so to speak, 'subjectify being'. He relates to the particular plant, animal, or whatever, in an intense manner which 'normal' people lack, and his means of communicating his experience is images, rather than intrinsically general words.

I do not wish to argue here that mental pathologies can lead to profane revelation, but given the grave difficulties in adequately identifying and understanding many such pathologies, an openness to the possibilities they may also offer is essential. If one accepts the fact that these pathologies need not just be the unsolved problems of medical and social engineering, one must take seriously the reality that Sacks refers to, the existential reality of a self-consciousness which can never be wholly transcended into a universal structure. To take an example closer to Hegel: artistic creation and mental pathology are often closely linked in the nineteenth century. Hölderlin – once Hegel's friend, and, as we saw, a philosopher of some considerable talent – eventually became mentally ill. Before descending into madness he produced poems which use language in a manner that still challenges us today. Hölderlin's experience is characteristic of some of the most significant modern artists: they exhibit an almost unbearable tension between individual consciousness and the collectively acknowledged systems of signs in which that consciousness tries to express itself.[15] Hegel's view of language, and of aesthetics, tends to underplay this tension in the name of language as the general means of articulation. Vital as accommodation to the language of a community is, there is always a risk that such accommodation can add to the repressions within that community. This is why individual attempts to break out of existing communicative resources are at the same time both dangerous and necessary, and this needs to be reflected in any philosophical account of the relationship between the individual and the universal.[16]

Paradoxically, as anyone who has read much Hegel will be more than aware, Hegel's own relationship with language is hardly an illustration of his theoretical point. Not the least fascination of Hegel's philosophy is the struggle for articulation carried on within his texts. It is clear, for example, that the *Phenomenology*'s significance is not exhausted by the philosophical arguments which can be extracted from it. The dimension opened up by Hegel's innovative philosophical language cannot just be said to be an inferior manifestation of what his work communicates. Clearly, if his philosophy did conclusively obviate the philosophical questions which dominate the Western tradition by resolving the problem of the absolute, the manner of its presentation would be a secondary

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consideration. The real historical effects of the *Phenomenology* have, though, more often depended upon the imaginative impulses conveyed by such passages as 'Lordship and Bondage', or the reflections on Antigone, than upon the grand systematic conclusions. The further point here is that the boundaries between philosophical and aesthetic texts are not fixed. As I have tried to suggest with regard to the *Logic*, the power of Hegel's work may in certain respects have much to do with its aesthetic dimension that is not simply a function of the propositions of which it consists.

This somewhat heretical view of Hegel may help us come to terms with an important element of thinking about language in this period. It is no coincidence that other thinkers in Germany are increasingly concerned, like Novalis, with the 'unsayable', and this has for too long been understood as though it were solely a mystical Romantic quirk. However, this notion is important for its reminder that general resources of articulation always exist in a potential tension with the non-propositional aspects of the subject's self-consciousness. The subject is here not just regarded in terms of its being transparent to the general linguistic community, or, to cite the post-structuralist version of the same issue, in terms of its being an 'effect' of the textual mirrors in which it reflects itself. Consciousness, as we have already seen in Schelling and the Romantics, is instead seen as having a ground which can never be fully transparent to it and this gives rise to the individual need for expressive resources which cannot be resolved into philosophical explanation. Thinking about these issues is, as we have seen, linked to theoretical reflection on language, to aesthetic theory, and to music. Hegel's attempt to resolve the contradictions in the principle of subjectivity (its 'one-sidedness', as Habermas put it), and his announcing the 'end of art', coincide with the emergence of the kind of reflection upon language described by Taylor, and with the related flowering of musical creativity. These changes constitute a constellation which will concern us in the coming chapters. Although Hegel inaugurates vital dimensions of historical reflection upon aesthetics, he at the same time does not countenance that some of the positions he develops may be inadequate to the phenomena they are supposed to grasp. Let us therefore now turn directly to the *Aesthetics*.

The Idea as sensuous appearance

Hegel famously defines beauty as the 'sensuous *appearing* of the Idea' (Hegel 1965 I p. 117). Qualifying beauty as the 'sensuous' appearing of the Idea puts beauty into an inferior position to philosophy: its reliance on the sensuous brings with it a dependence upon what is transient. Even artworks, which, because of their status as manifestations of *Geist*, are not subject to the same natural iron law of disappearance as living objects possessing natural beauty, cannot sever all connection with the transient. Only the Idea, speculative philosophy in Hegel's sense, can do this. The problem here is again how such a claim is to be understood. On the one hand, Hegel's claim prefigures Max Weber's

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account of the processes of rationalisation in the modern world, in which modern societies are increasingly determined by universal forms of thinking and organisation which must exclude the particularist kinds of thought necessary for art; on the other, if 'philosophy' is understood in an emphatic sense and fails in its task of overcoming contingency, Hegel's model needs to be questioned in the light of other ways of thinking about the art/philosophy relationship. The detail of Hegel's argument does, though, lead at the same time to some very important insights.

Hegel insists, against Kant, that beauty in works of art has a higher status than natural beauty. This might seem strange, given the apparent temporal priority of natural beauty before artistic beauty. However, Hegel can actually be understood here as revealing something vital about aesthetics and modernity. His intention is, as always, to undermine any kind of reliance on 'immediacy'. He therefore denies that there is immediate pleasurable contemplation of the natural world – 'natural beauty appears only as a reflex of beauty which belongs to *Geist*' (Hegel 1965 I p. 14) – and the history of Western art tends to back up his suspicion. Before the modern period the beauty of landscapes was generally not a central focus of pictorial art, the landscape serving either as mere background or as a source of symbols of God's creation. The idea that nature can be beautiful per se simply does not square, for example, with the widespread sentiment in Europe prior to the second half of the eighteenth century that mountains involving dangers to human beings are ugly. The appreciation of wild nature for its own sake is indeed predominantly a modern phenomenon, and landscape painting first emerges in a major way in a country, Holland, which is itself largely a result of human control of nature.

There is, however, another dimension to this important historical point. Hegel's argument relies on the idea that nature is seen by pre-modern societies as a threat to be overcome in the interests of self-preservation, so that the appreciation of natural beauty is linked to the subject's control over nature. The danger here is that the relationship can be understood in a one-sided manner, so that it is only to the extent that mind develops in relation to the ability to control nature that the beauty of nature can emerge. The problem in questioning this one-sided relationship is that one seems to have to rely on a dogmatic conception, of the kind suggested in Kant's invocation of a 'code through which nature talks to us figuratively in its beautiful forms' (*CJ* B p. 170, A p. 168), to do so. On the other hand, the complete refusal to countenance the idea that a certain stage of the development of human thought might render it open to the new resources of a nature which was previously seen as divine creation and as a threat beyond our control repeats precisely the problem Kant was concerned with in the *Critique of Judgement*. How do we avoid a wholesale split of our subjective being from nature? While it is clear that there is a socially mediated history of the appreciation of natural and artistic beauty, this does not mean that natural beauty is wholly accounted for by what we know of the history of its emergence.

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In *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno approvingly cites Verlaine's line, 'la mer est plus belle que les cathédrales' (Adorno 1973 p. 103) to suggest the complex dialectic involved in this issue. In order to be aware of the superior beauty of the sea one might first need cathedrals, a result of *Geist*, but for Gothic cathedrals one also needed the forms of trees for *Geist* to mediate. As Adorno puts it: 'That the beauty of nature is resistant to determination by mind misleads [Hegel] into a short-circuit in which he devalues that in art which is not mind qua intention' (p. 407). For Adorno 'intention' is the basis of instrumental reason, the control of things for human purposes. Natural beauty is therefore a manifestation of a non-instrumental relationship to nature, a result of contemplating nature as appearance: 'Like the experience of art, aesthetic experience of nature is an experience of images' (p. 407), that is, not of something concrete that is to be worked upon or conceptualised. Adorno's contention suggests why this question can lead to a central issue in contemporary philosophy.

When Rorty claims that we must give up the idea that we are answerable to anything other than ourselves, because the alternative is the kind of obeisance to a mythical something beyond ourselves characteristic of the Christian-Platonic heritage, he limits his argument to the cognitive and ethical spheres. His aim is to say farewell to 'representational thinking', in which thought is to correspond to the 'ready-made' world, and to abandon the search for absolute ethical certainties. Rorty thereby wishes to avoid what he sees as an unproductive 'public' pursuit, as a 'project of social cooperation', of what he thinks belongs in the sphere of 'private transcendence', namely 'projects of individual self-development' of the kind associated with aesthetic experience. However, this leaves too little space for the idea that learning to be answerable to nature for its own sake, rather than just for the sake of our own survival, may, as Heidegger and Adorno suggest, involve a dimension of thinking which itself is able to question some of the effects of the Christian-Platonic metaphysical tradition.

One point of the change in modern thinking which results in the emergence of aesthetic theory is precisely the acknowledgement of the need to attend to the resources opened up by the awareness of nature's value for its own sake. This awareness plays a vital role in the genesis of new kinds of aesthetic awareness and, as it already did for Schelling, in the genesis of ecological thinking. The emergence of concern with natural beauty is indeed, as Hegel claims, a historical stage in the development of *Geist*, but this concern can also be understood both as suggesting the *limits* of subjective reason and as a warning about the dominant developments in the modern history of *Geist*, of the kind that lead to ecological devastation. The underlying question here is whether what previously belonged to 'religion' as a public 'project of social cooperation', must, in the light of secularisation and rationalisation, now be located in the private domain. Any positive claims about the significance of natural beauty evidently do run the risk of mere dogmatism if they are seen as substantiating a strong teleological view. However, the wholesale exclusion of what can be learned from

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the appreciation of natural beauty leads to an even more questionable impoverishment of thought that itself has evident public, political effects.

Adorno suggests how one might conceive of a position which steers clear of the danger of invalid teleology and yet sustains the question of a more than cognitive link to nature when he claims: 'We are really no longer ourselves a piece of nature at the moment when we notice, when we recognise that we are a piece of nature', so that 'what transcends nature is nature which has become aware of itself' (Adorno 1996 pp. 154–5). This recognition is closely linked to the significance of natural beauty as a means of appreciating what is beyond a merely narcissistic relation to the objective world. The question is to what extent Hegel's conception of the relationship between natural and artistic beauty entails the kind of one-sidedness suggested by Adorno. This takes us to the heart of Hegel's conception.

It is not, of course, that Hegel ignores the significance of what we can learn from aesthetic experience. In the *Aesthetics* he states, underlining his view of the primacy of artistic over natural beauty, that: 'Far from being simple appearance the appearances of art should be seen as possessing the higher reality and the truer existence in relation to normal reality' (Hegel 1965 I p. 20). Unlike immediate empirical reality, which appears to offer the most obvious source of truth, but which requires universal forms of thought to be intelligible at all, artistic appearance 'points through itself to something spiritual [*Geistiges*]' (I p. 20). A picture of a mountain involves more 'mediation' than just looking at a mountain in a natural landscape: think, for example, of a Caspar David Friedrich painting, which will probably not have been painted from a direct apprehension of the mountain, but rather as a subjective projection in a studio. The painting can then change how we are able to appreciate real landscapes. However, even this does not reach the level of abstraction which Hegel sees as vital to modernity.

The central issue emerges when Hegel makes the famous claim that art, because it is 'limited to a distinct content', no longer 'fulfils our highest need'. 'Thought and reflection have overtaken [*überflügelt* in the sense of 'flown over'] art' (I p. 21). The arguments of the *Logic* about the need to transcend the particular and the transient are therefore carried over into a historical assessment of art's relationship to philosophy. The higher truth, as we saw, belongs to other modes of reflection, culminating in Hegel's system:

> The constitution of reflection of our contemporary life makes it necessary, both in relation to the will and in relation to judgement, to establish general view-points and accordingly to regulate the particular, so that general forms, laws, duties, rights, maxims are valid as the bases of determination and are the principle rulers. . . . The *science* of art is thus in our time much more necessary than in times in which art for itself as art provided complete satisfaction. (I p. 21)

Aesthetic theory emerges for Hegel at the time when aesthetic praxis is no longer central to the articulation of truth. Earlier in the chapter I cited Danto's comment about the contemporary art scene, that 'the degree to which the

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appreciation of art becomes a matter of applied philosophy can hardly be overestimated'. For Danto, though, this state of affairs also leads to questions about the borderlines between philosophy and art, art having become increasingly self-reflexive – in this respect at least he comes closer to Adorno and the Romantics than to Hegel. Yet again the difficulty lies in interpreting the appropriate context for Hegel's remarks.

There is no doubt that the establishment of the modern cultural spheres of natural science and law depends in important respects on overcoming the particular and on setting up universal ways of thinking that can be applied to particular cases. The fight against feudalism and the arbitrary authority of the Church in the name of universal rights and scientific objectivity are inescapable necessities in modernity. However, it is clear that the process of modern rationalisation has not led to the triumph of philosophy, if philosophy is conceived of as the discipline which is to bring about the unification of the ever more specialised spheres of human practice.[17] The real nature of modernity consists in the takeover of the tasks of philosophy by the natural sciences, and there is no doubt that this has major effects upon the nature and significance of art. Hegel sees one side of this, but he does not ponder the consequences of the failure of philosophy to integrate the differing spheres of practice. As Heidegger suggests, Hegel's claims for philosophy actually lead in the direction of the subordination of philosophy to the sciences, as part of the fate of 'Western metaphysics'. The unifying function which Habermas refers to as 'the religious power of unification via the medium of reason' is not fulfilled by philosophy, of a Hegelian or any other kind. Neither, of course, does modern art achieve this unification, despite the hopes suggested in the *STI* and, as we shall see in Chapter 8, by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*. How, then, *is* Hegel to be understood here? The answer to this question will affect how one conceives of the task of modern philosophy and how one understands the role of art in modernity.

The contemporary renewal of interest in Hegel relates not least to fears about scientism and to the desire for philosophy to make a contribution to the problems which arise from reflection on what Habermas describes as the 'colonisation of the life-world' by the systematic forms of modern life. Hegel is seen as making major contributions to our understanding of the roots of these issues and to a holistic view which may affect how we confront them. Accepting that Hegel is right in arguing that art cannot be the determining form of *Geist* in the modern world, what of its relation to philosophy in the historical account of the development of the arts in the *Aesthetics*? It is against this background that judgements on Hegel's contemporary significance must be made.

Hegel frequently supports his arguments about the subordinate role of the art in modernity with the example of the superiority of Christianity over Pagan, and particularly Greek, religion. Hegel is obviously a monotheist. Greek art, which represents the Gods in human form, has as its content 'the unity of human and divine nature, a unity which precisely because it is *immediate* and *in*

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itself can be adequately manifested in an immediate and *sensuous* manner' (Hegel 1965 I p. 86). The *knowledge* of the unity of human and divine, which requires reflection, cannot, for Hegel, be present in a concrete object like a sculpture. We have already seen a version of this argument in Schelling. Classical art (by which Hegel usually means Greek sculpture) expresses a stage of the development of *Geist* in which the sensuous and *Geist* are unified: the material ceases to be just a block of marble and is formed by *Geist* into a sensuous manifestation of itself. The advance in Christianity is that God 'should be known as *Geist* and in *Geist*. His element of existence is thereby essentially inner knowledge and not the external natural form via which he will only be representable immediately and not according to the whole depth of his concept' (I p. 79). This argument should also be familiar.

Hegel echoes Kant's evaluation of the ban on images in Jewish theology in his account of how the sublime arises from awareness of the limits of sensuous manifestations of the supersensuous. The highest points of Kant's philosophy were only ever regulative ideas, which led him to the notion of 'aesthetic ideas' as a means of concretising what were otherwise abstractions. Hegel's claim that philosophy can transcend sensuous representation means that for him the idea of the 'new mythology', which would make ideas aesthetic for modern societies, is merely another form of 'immediacy' which the 'general forms' that regulate modern societies render inadequate. The difficulty here lies in how the relationship between sensuous phenomena and abstract thought is conceived, and in the ways this understanding affects modern culture. As we saw, Baumgarten's concern with sensuous particularity is a result of fears about those aspects of the Enlightenment which threatened to neglect the particular dimension of human experience manifest in sensuous perception. His aim was to suggest how the sensuous particular could be seen as part of a meaningful whole without being subsumed into cognitive abstractions. Hamann linked the concern with sensuous particularity to the nature of language, which is always both sensuous and intelligible. His ideas have been echoed in Derrida's argument in the essay 'White Mythology' (Derrida 1972) that a certain understanding of the divide between sensuousness and pure thought has dominated Western philosophy and that the divide can be deconstructed by attention to the ineliminable role of metaphor in philosophical discourse.[18] That this issue has been a constant problem in Western culture is evident from the following famous example.

The origin of what Freud calls the 'Moses religion' is, as Kant already argued, linked to the ban on images, which means one is compelled to honour a God one cannot see. For Freud this meant a 'subordination of sensuous perception to an idea that is to be called abstract, a triumph of spirituality [*Geistigkeit*] over sensuality, strictly speaking a renunciation of a drive with its psychologically necessary consequences' (Freud 1982 9 p. 559). Renouncing a drive is likely to give rise to neurosis, a form of the return of the repressed. Schelling already described the development of the 'I' in the *STI* and in the Munich lectures in terms of drives and repression. The link of the constitution of subjectivity to

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the effects of what has to be repressed for the subject to sustain its identity is a constant theme from Romanticism until the present. Genevieve Lloyd (1984) points out that this 'triumph of spirituality' is attached by Freud to a story which has patriarchal implications. The subordination of the sensuous results from the privileging of the father, whose invisible role in the production of children is given primacy over the visible role of the mother. This privileging requires an inference that an act committed nine months before the appearance of the child is the vital act – hence Freud's interpretation of the genesis of abstraction. The same kind of story is told at the end of *Oresteia*, when the new law of the city is legitimated against the matrilineal law of the country in terms of the myth of the decisive role of the father in procreation. The achievements of *Geist* often seem, then, to be brought about at the expense of the female. In Greek culture the contradictions involved in the establishing of new law were enacted in a cultural form which helped that culture cope with the most devastating kinds of necessity. We now see via the development of feminism the extent to which even this aesthetic response to repression involves a further kind of repression. Despite this, the aesthetic representation still tries to articulate the pain involved in facing contradictions in ways which a philosophical account of the founding of a new system of law cannot.

Hegel's view that one can regard the painful overcoming of contradiction with tranquillity once one has understood its necessity failed, as we saw, to offer any real means of dealing with the affective dimensions of our transience and fragility. Such tranquillity can, therefore, only be achieved by means of repression. Although Hegel is aware of the pain involved in the development of reason and in our awareness of our facticity, this does not seem to lead him to ask whether the dynamic of rationalisation might sometimes demand too high a price, for which other aspects of culture must compensate. This compensatory function cannot be eliminated or replaced by the advances of philosophy, science or law. If this is the case, art may sometimes indeed be what fulfils our highest need in a post-theological culture, because it links the affective, the ethical and the cognitive in ways which philosophy and other cultural forms cannot. Art can no longer do so in the way tragedy did for the polis, but that does not mean that art can be surpassed in the way Hegel suggests. The idea that aesthetic awareness is ultimately just a prelude to something higher may make sense as part of a historical story in which the move from myth and religion to science and philosophy is seen as what characterises modernity. Only if Hegel's totalising philosophical aims were realised, though, would this story be able to exhaust the relationship between the cognitive, the ethical and the aesthetic. There is not space to do justice to it here, but it is clear that a feminist account of aesthetics can provide important new insights into these questions.

Hegel's account of the development of art shows the considerable strengths and undeniable weaknesses of his aesthetics. There are three stages of the development of art: the Symbolic, the Classical, and the Romantic. In 'Symbolic' art the meaning of the work and the form used to express it are not essentially

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related. Hegel regards mythological stories about abstract themes like life and death as symbolic. Abstract ideas are expressed via what can be observed in nature: the observation of how plants die and grow again the next year is used as a story to explain death and the continuation of life in general. This way of thinking always involves the disadvantage of beginning with the concrete – for example, a particular story like the myth of Persephone – which is not adequate to express a general truth because it is tied to the other meanings of the specific story. The Sphinx is for Hegel the 'Symbol of the Symbolic itself' (Hegel 1965 I p. 352): human *Geist* attempts to emerge from the animal realm but does not fully succeed because the animal body remains. The body is, of course, linked to a female torso. Hegel's interpretation of this fact, like Freud's story of monotheism, omits the dimension of the history of patriarchy in which the lower forms of mind are associated with the female, as does his account of Antigone in the *Phenomenology*. Feminist interpretations have changed our perspective on such issues, and Hegel's method of classifying forms of art in a developmental history fails to take account of the way in which the *interpretation* of symbols can never be fully controlled. Symbols for Hegel retain something which is not clearly *articulated* (a word that repeatedly recurs in the *Aesthetics*), and must, as such, be transcended into literal concepts by philosophy. At the same time as Hegel is presenting this account of symbol, as we shall see in Chapter 6, Schleiermacher develops a view of interpretation which will undermine it by pointing to the ways in which interpretation can never be complete.

The next stage of art in Hegel's scheme, the 'Classical', unites 'meaning and corporeality' (I p. 418): 'only the externality of man is capable of revealing the spiritual in a sensuous manner' (I p. 419). Greek sculpture based on the human form is an expression of the Ideal, though it is still tied to particularity. The Romantic stage is founded in the idea of incarnation: God becomes flesh and so undergoes the pain of self-division. There is here an echo of the statement at the end of the *Logic*, that the already constituted Idea '*freely releases*' itself into nature (Hegel 1970 II p. 573). In Christian culture – which is largely what Hegel means by 'Romantic art' – this self-division is expressed in the story of Christ's crucifixion, which is followed by God's return to himself in the resurrection and the ascension. Romantic art expresses the 'return into self' in a concrete story, and so still remains at the level of the image. The Christian story, though, is dynamic in a way that Greek sculpture's 'noble simplicity and quiet greatness' (Winckelmann) in the face of pain and death is not. For Hegel, Romantic art 'sublates', in the threefold sense of negates, preserves and elevates, the divisions that Greek art only contemplates. It can be argued, therefore, that Hegel's philosophy is a transformation of Protestant theology which raises it above its residual attachment to the particular story, such as the incarnation and the crucifixion, in order to reveal the universality it contains.

The Protestant dimension becomes most clearly apparent when Hegel discusses death in the *Aesthetics*. In Romantic art death

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> is only a dying off of the natural soul and of finite subjectivity, a dying off which only relates negatively to that which is itself negative, which sublates that which is vain [*das Nichtige*, i.e. the transient] and thereby mediates the liberation of *Geist* from its finitude and division, as well as mediating the reconciliation of the subject with the absolute. (Hegel 1965 I p. 504)

Greek art's existence in an objective sensuous form reflected a view of life as the external existence of the body. Death was, correspondingly, mere negativity. In contrast: 'In the Romantic world view death means negativity, i.e. the negation of the negative, and therefore turns just as much into the affirmative, as the resurrection of *Geist* out of its simple naturalness and inappropriate finitude' (I p. 504). In a characteristic example of the identity of identity and difference, death is therefore the life of *Geist*. To what extent are such arguments simply theological? Hegel's arguments about death in the *Aesthetics* involve the same attitude towards sensuous existence as did those of the *Logic*: it is only the overcoming of the sensuous that constitutes its truth. If one is able to adopt a Platonic attitude to the truth, as the ultimate aim of philosophy, Hegel's transformation of religious ideas can be integrated into a meaning-giving picture. The question for subsequent philosophy is whether even this attenuated and dynamised form of Platonism can really 'answer our highest need', or whether it simply represses vital dimensions of finite human existence.

Hegel's discussion of the 'end of art' now takes on another aspect. For Hegel, Classical art's combination of the spiritual and the natural is the 'completion of the realm of beauty. There cannot be anything, and nothing can become, more beautiful' (I p. 498). Consequently, in Romantic art, 'beauty in its most appropriate form and its most apt content is no longer the ultimate aim' (I p. 499). Instead of trying to reflect the truth externally, which would burden it with transience, Romantic art, as a more developed manifestation of *Geist*, shows that the truth of thought is independent of contingency and externality. It therefore does not really matter which external content is used in Romantic art: even the most prosaic objects of daily life can be used, because the truth depends on their being overcome. At moments like this the power of Hegel's conception is evident. His theory even has considerable predictive power when considered in relation to modernist art of the kind that culminates with Duchamp's readymades. Hegel also refers to music in this context. Music's content is not specific and it is, as such, the 'key-note' of Romanticism. Its task is 'not to echo objectivity itself [i.e. represent external objects], but rather to echo the way in which the inner self is moved in itself according to its subjectivity and inner soul [i.e. represent feelings]' (II p. 261). Music does not engage with objectivity in the manner that conceptual thought does, and so has no essential effect on social reality, but it is a more developed form of *Geist* than visual art. Further implications of this position will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Hegel argues, then, that the modern period has moved beyond art: 'we get as the final point of the Romantic per se the randomness of the external and the internal and a falling apart of these two sides, via which art negates itself [*sich*

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aufhebt] and shows the necessity for consciousness to appropriate higher forms for the grasping of truth than art is able to offer' (I p. 509). The higher forms are evidently those of philosophy, in the wide sense we have seen, which includes the natural sciences and the law. Instead of being concerned with the actual results of the Idea's move into the pain and division of natural existence, which are dealt with in the particular sciences, philosophy's task is to show how this form of the existence of the Idea can be transcended.

The prose of the modern world

What, then, does this imply for the theory of art? The art form that most evidently relates to Hegel's account of why Romantic art 'negates itself' is the novel, the form which, as Mikhail Bakhtin will suggest, can encompass all other literary forms, and which is therefore able to speak of any aspect of existence.[19] What is lacking in the novel is therefore an essential relationship between form and content. The content in a novel, which is necessarily particular because it is the story of specific individuals, cannot, for Hegel, be what is most essential. The content shows by its arbitrariness that art no longer articulates the essential truth of the modern world. A novel can be the story of anyone, and that story only becomes significant to the extent that the individual is transcended into a more general significance.[20] On the other hand, it is precisely the ability of the novel to include any aspect of modernity, however contingent, that has made it so vital to our self-descriptions. The novel keeps horizons open by its very resistance to 'closure', something reflected in the often apparently insurmountable difficulties of many of the most significant novelists in bringing their work to a satisfactory conclusion.[21] A similar point could be made, of course, about the move away from the triumphant tonal conclusion in Western classical music. In Hegel's terms, overcoming the contingency of modern life that is evident in the novel is the task of philosophy. But the question arises once again: what if philosophy cannot fulfil this task?

Hegel is predominantly employed these days to support the argument that philosophy should renounce foundational claims and should instead explore the normative commitments within communities which make possible the truths which determine our world. However, even if this is an apt way to describe what Hegel is doing, it is by no means clear that such exploration is mainly the preserve of philosophy. Indeed, Rorty has argued that it may well be that the historical exploration of our normative commitments which is one of the great innovations of Hegel's work may now better be carried out by the novel. The novel's ability to countenance the sort of contingency which keeps our moral imagination alive, rather than trying to reduce morality to systematic philosophical form, is in this sense more apt to the ethical complexities of the modern world. In certain areas of human life, such as the sphere of the development of the kind of human feelings which can lead to a more humane world, the novel, rather than moral philosophy, also tends to have had a more widespread impact

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on society.[22] Here we encounter another of those puzzles concerning how Hegel is best interpreted.

Consider the following constellation. During the period in which philosophy reaches the stage where Hegel claims the absolute, the reconciliation of our thinking and the world, can be explicated, reality has at the same time become 'prosaic'. For Hegel the novel 'in the modern sense presupposes a reality which has been sorted out into *prose*' (II p. 452). In a typical reversal, the novel becomes concerned with how the 'poetry' of life – usually in the form of an idealistic hero – attempts to reassert its rights against the prose of daily existence. For Hegel this can end tragically or comically. The hero may founder on the contradictions between his ideals and the reality in which he tries to realise them, or he may, as often in Goethe, become reconciled with the social order by insight into its necessities. As an empirical point about the German novel of Hegel's time this is pretty apt. However, what is important for our understanding of Hegel – and this is not just explicable by his conservatism in his later years – is why he is happy to juxtapose the highest reconciliation in philosophy with his claim that life in bourgeois society has become prosaic.

Interpretations of Hegel are, as I suggested at the outset, often divided between those which seek to make him part of a 'post-metaphysical' reorientation of philosophy and those which seek to sustain his emphatic role as the great systematic resolver of the problems of philosophy. The sorting out of reality into prose is closely analogous to Weber's description of the 'disenchantment' inherent in modern rationalisation, where real technical and organisational means take over from imaginary ones, at the price of the loss of an immanently meaningful world. The absolute Idea thus seems from this perspective to be open to two interpretations. In the first, the realisation that the erstwhile metaphysical hopes of philosophy have been overcome by a method which obviates the need to seek foundations leaves us to get on with what we already successfully doing while also demanding explicit public forms of legitimation. In the second, philosophy recognises the superiority of the forces which take over the modern world – in the manner suggested by the later Heidegger's interpretation of the history of Western metaphysics which culminates with Nietzsche – as the history of the subjectification of being. To what extent does the former position shade over into the latter and is there an alternative approach to philosophy's role? Clearly it would be absurd to attempt to challenge the superiority of the natural sciences as the most effective means of controlling and explaining the workings of the natural world. What can be challenged, as we have seen, is the exclusive orientation to the sciences as the source of legitimacy: as Weber insists, the sciences are not self-legitimating. In this sense it seems appropriate to consider whether Hegel's aesthetics does not suggest a weakness in the general direction of his philosophy that cannot be skirted by his anti-metaphysical interpreters.

A notorious passage on what Hegel refers to as the 'novelistic' – that clash of novel hero and reality paradigmatically present in the figure of Don

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Quixote – highlights the problem. Hegel considers the hero who confronts the world with his ideals: 'These battles are, in the modern world, nothing but the years of apprenticeship' – he uses the word *Lehrjahre*, echoing Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* – they are 'the education of the individual via existing reality and they gain their meaning thereby'. The education of the hero leads to the following:

> Finally he usually does get his girl and some job or other, marries and becomes a Philistine like all the others; the wife runs the household, children inevitably arrive, the adored woman who initially was the Only one, the Angel, looks roughly like everyone else, the job involves work and unpleasantness, the marriage the burden of domestic life, and so it is that one ends up with the hangover that everyone else has. (I p. 568)

How does Hegel reconcile the resigned cynicism of this passage with the claims of his system, and what does this tell us about interpreting the absolute Idea?

The danger of slipping from the first to the second interpretation is apparent in passages like the following. In the conclusion of the *Philosophy of History* Hegel claims that 'Philosophy moves to contemplation through its antipathy to the movements of direct passions in reality. . . . Only the realisation that what has happened and happens daily not only does not happen without God but is also essentially His own work can reconcile *Geist* with world history and reality' (Hegel 1961 p. 605). The ease with which one can slip from a position which, as the *Phenomenology* does, shows how our thought is necessarily connected to the real and must be immanently justified within social practices, to one in which this connection implies a questionable reconciliation with the status quo is very evident here. It is a commonplace of the Western tradition that philosophy should transcend the 'direct passions', but the history of the novel, which relies precisely upon such passions, should give pause for thought. Both the stubborn refusal of the novel, with its constant incorporation of new perspectives, to disappear from the repertoire of means we use to make sense of the modern world, and the diminishing importance of the products of academic philosophy as a means of orientation in modern societies suggest that at least one of the versions of Hegel's attempts to transcend contingency may be invalid.

In his *Theory of the Novel*, written in the face of the outbreak of the First World War, Georg Lukács completely changes the interpretation of the way in which modern reality has become 'prosaic'. For Lukács, who follows ideas from Friedrich Schlegel and Kierkegaard, the prosaic development of reality and the sense of the individual's alienation that are graphically expressed by Hegel in the passage on the novel's hero, are not adequately confronted by claiming that a philosophical understanding of modernity can explain how they come about. What Hegel regards as the 'randomness of the external and the internal and a falling apart of these two sides', Lukács interprets as the expression of

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'transcendental homelessness'. The novel becomes the locus of the search for meaning in a post-theological culture. This search for meaning in a world where the significance of individual existence is subordinated to the universal is not something that can be coped with by philosophical insight into how it could not be otherwise. The First World War made it rather difficult to argue that the most philosophy was capable of was 'reconciling *Geist* with world history and reality', rather than making it possible to oppose historical reality in the name of future hope.

Lukács also follows the Romantic claim that the subject can never gain the self-transparency which Hegel sees as achieved in his philosophy. 'Irony', the central term in Lukács's theory, which he borrows from Schlegel, is the expression of the ultimate failure of the subject to find a truth which would make it at home in the world. The subject's failure to be transparent to itself within a wider totality is therefore *constitutive* of the novel form, which makes it the most characteristic form for modernity.[23] Lukács's argument echoes the assertion in Schelling's *Philosophy of Art* that in the modern era '*Poesie*' is 'only possible for whoever can create for himself a mythology, a closed circle of *Poesie* out of his very limitations' (Schelling I/5 p. 444). His position also echoes the Romantic account of the failure of the reflection model of subjectivity. Instead of the work of art being transcended into something higher, as it is in Hegel, the novel becomes a response to the subject's failure to attain a stable sense of its place in the world. This leads to a further difficult interpretive issue. The choice we saw in the Introduction between regarding modernity as the onset of nihilism and regarding it as the opening up of endless new possibilities is echoed in the differing assessments by Lukács's and Mikhail Bakhtin of the significance of the novel. Lukács's pessimistic assessment of the rise of the novel is not echoed by Bakhtin, who instead focuses both on the way the novel can give a voice to those in a society who are excluded from the dominant languages of that society and on the plurality of world-disclosure this makes possible. Bakhtin thus offers a different way of examining the novel's role in modernity which does not involve the kind of apocalyptism present in Lukács, and which does not give philosophy the kind of privileged role it has in Hegel. What does this mean, then, for the relationship between philosophy, art and aesthetics in modernity?

Philosophy and art after Hegel

The predictive force of Hegel's view of the novel is undeniable, and lends plausibility to significant parts of the rest of his argument about the nature of modernity. The incorporation into the novel of random material from daily life, such as newspaper cuttings or unedited historical documents, and the attention to more and more of the basic functions of life, of the kind present, for example, in Joyce's *Ulysses*, is characteristic of the modernist novel and is congruent with Hegel's verdict on the arbitrariness of the relation between

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form and content in 'Romantic' art. The arbitrariness in the novel is, significantly, often balanced, as it is in *Ulysses*, by the employment of residual elements from mythology as a means of sustaining a coherence that the material otherwise lacks. There is, though, a tension in relation to such phenomena between opposed conceptions of modernity, which is also apparent in the differing readings of Hegel's philosophy we have examined. Adorno claims in *Aesthetic Theory* that:

> Hegel's philosophy fails in relation to the beautiful: because he equates reason and reality . . . he hypostasises the structuring of all being by subjectivity as the absolute. He regards the non-identical solely as a fetter on subjectivity, instead of determining the experience of non-identity as the telos of the aesthetic subject, as its emancipation. (Adorno 1973 p. 119)

For Adorno, even though it is unequivocally to be welcomed, the weakening of the hold of tradition in modernity in fact results mainly in new kinds of constraint, despite the new possibilities for freedom. One evident manifestation of this situation is that the means to alleviate suffering, and material and cultural deprivation are constantly being augmented, but the forms of social organisation and the cultural resources which would make them generally effective do not develop in the same manner, and even regress into barbarism. A further manifestation is the fact that those aspects of the subject which resist being subsumed into generality and which are vital to the genesis of modern art become relatively insignificant in relation to the demands of modern societies for what can be measured, counted and administrated.

From Adorno's perspective, Hegel conspires with this situation because, as Habermas also argues, he makes contingently developed objective spirit into absolute spirit. One must, though, again be careful to differentiate here. Hegel's argument about the novel is important because it offers a way of understanding both why it is that the material of modern art has less and less substantial connection to the main tendencies of modern societies, and why modern art is confronted with the problem of trying to incorporate abstractions of the kind inimical to the particularity upon which art had previously relied.[24] This does not necessarily mean, however, that Hegel's interpretation of the situation is wholly adequate. Hegel, as we saw, thinks philosophy can overcome divisions between the ever more specialised spheres of social life in a way art cannot. It is arguable, though, that the main kinds of 'unification' that characterise modernity are, as Adorno claims, the industrialisation of scientific knowledge, the dominance of the commodity form, including in the culture industry, and the spread of bureaucratic standardisation across the globe, none of which need of its own accord add to human self-determination.[25] Given the decisive role of these developments, which encroach upon virtually every sphere of modern life, the question is what relationship philosophy should have to them and what relationship philosophy should have to what they exclude. Once again Hegel's role in deciding this is ambiguous, given his simultaneous desire both to grasp the

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reality of an ever more systematised and differentiated world, and to restore the kind of unity which religion had previously made possible.

The questions generated by Hegel's arguments about the end of art are now perhaps best understood as cultural questions concerning the results of the separation of spheres of human activity. One of the most informative facts here is that the most significant artistic production in modernity – Mahler, Kafka, Proust, Schœnberg, Klee, Charlie Parker – is on the one hand radically individual and particular, and on the other seems to derive a universal significance from precisely this individuality and particularity. It is not clear that Hegel's view of art can really help us to understand such a relationship between the universal and the particular. Hegel's attempt at a philosophical explication of the overcoming of the particular by general forms of truth offers a profound diagnosis of the nature of modernity, but it also contains an important unintended warning about the possible negative consequences of that overcoming. I shall return to the issues raised by Hegel in the Conclusion, when I examine them in relation to Rorty's separation of 'public' and 'private' in the understanding of modern culture. Rorty regards the 'public', problem-solving resources of natural science and 'projects of social cooperation' as rightly becoming separate from 'private' projects of self-development in modernity. The tensions this entails already appear in the work of Hegel's contemporary and rival Friedrich Schleiermacher. It is to him that we now turn for an account of philosophy and art which proposes a serious alternative to Hegel. Schleiermacher tries to understand the relationship between the universal and the particular in ways which are now being echoed in contemporary philosophy. As we shall see, he comes closer in some respects to what contemporary Hegelians want from Hegel than Hegel himself.

Notes

1 As neither Mind nor Spirit is wholly apt for translating the term *Geist*, the former being too reminiscent of 'the philosophy of mind', the latter having too many quasi-religious connotations, I shall sometimes use the German word and try to make clearer in the context what is meant.

2 This can also be read in a more positive direction, in which scepticism ceases to be a concern because of our undoubted ability to cope with the world and find better ways of doing so. This is Rorty's position, which shares much with the deflationary reading of Hegel, not least because of his influence on it.

3 This is not exactly how Hegel argues this progression but I think McTaggart is right to suggest that 'something' has to follow 'being' and 'nothing'.

4 This is partly because Pinkard tends to base his position predominantly on the *Phenomenology*.

5 The *Logic* does involve historical references, but they are not to be understood in the same way as those in the *Phenomenology*, which, albeit generally indirectly, refer to major historical events and texts.

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6 It should be clear that what is at issue here is not the fact that logical forms of thinking must involve a specific empirical content, which, in terms of the usual idea of logic is clearly false, but rather Hegel's conviction that a complete self-defining system can be shown to map the very structure of the real.
7 The change in the nature of concerts and in the behaviour of listeners, in which the music becomes the more exclusive focus of attention, points to this.
8 Lenin, for example, thought the *Logic* of great value for his thinking.
9 Clearly not all music can be construed in these terms, but the most revealing music of Hegel's period seems to sustain its power for reasons of precisely this kind.
10 Though even this raises questions: whether a word really can be said to possess a general meaning in the manner demanded by many semantic theories is still highly contentious, as I suggested in Chapter 4 in relation to Derrida.
11 Taylor argues that the constitutive function is more essential to language, and this is in line, for example, with Rorty's contention that thinking of language solely in terms of representation gives rise to many of the intractable dilemmas in the analytical philosophy of language. Rorty thinks the development of 'semantical metalanguage', in which we can 'say things like, "It is also called 'Y', but for your purposes you should describe it as X" ' (Rorty 1999 p. 65) is the deciding factor in what may be called a language. The fact that there can be music about music, for example in Mahler's ironic employment of musical material, suggests that music can function as a kind of metalanguage to those who understand music. The point is that there is no definitive way of determining the extension of the concept of language.
12 This admittedly ignores the idea that works of art can, in a non-semantic sense, be true, by being 'right' in their own particular world-disclosing manner, which I explore in Bowie 1997.
13 This issue recurs in the philosophy of mind in the debate about pain: why is it nonsense to say 'I thought you had that pain yesterday, not me?'
14 In Germany today these positions are paradigmatically represented by Karl Heinz Bohrer and Peter Bürger.
15 He did, of course, produce poetry after he became mad. The poetry is strangely conventional and lacks the disturbing imaginative power of his late work before his breakdown.
16 This issue has recurred in the differences between Gadamer and Habermas, and Gadamer and Frank, with Gadamer playing the role of Hegel.
17 This is well suggested by Weber's account of the increasing specialisation and loss of general perspectives in modern life in 'Science as Vocation'.
18 As we saw, Schelling's identity philosophy does not straightforwardly fit this pattern.
19 The argument also works in certain respects for Western music's incorporation of more and more that was previously noise, at the risk of ceasing to be music at all for most listeners.
20 This point, as Lukács realised, has to do with why the novel very rarely has major historical figures as its central characters, and why, when it does, the novel in question rarely succeeds.
21 This includes both authors, like Kafka, who seem not to be able to conclude at all, and authors like Zola, Thomas Mann and others, who take over mythical apocalyptic forms of ending which are inadequate to the material which precedes the end (see Bowie 1979).
22 In certain respects Rorty therefore echoes the arguments of the 'System Programme'.

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23 Frank has explored this idea via the motif of the 'endless journey' (Frank 1979, 1995).
24 This issue is superbly dealt with in Heinz Schlaffer's account of Goethe's use of allegory in *Faust* Part II (Schlaffer 1981). The link between the need to deal in abstraction – such as issues to do with the development of capital – and the increasing use of allegorical or mythological elements is the key here (see also Bowie 1979).
25 This is not to say that these aspects of modernity are somehow to be rejected: that would be impossible and absurd. The question is what means are available for countering their effects, given their irresistible power in many areas.

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