

## THE GREEK PROFILE: HEGEL'S AESTHETICS AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF A PSEUDO-SCIENCE

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### I.

The purpose of this study is threefold. First, as my title anticipates, I wish to examine Hegel's discussion of classical sculpture and, in particular, the importance he attributes to the Greek profile. To do this it will be necessary to familiarize ourselves with the sources Hegel invokes in his discussion of Greek sculpture, sources which, though largely obscure to modern readers, were widely known at the beginning of the nineteenth century and served to condition Hegel's treatment of classical beauty. As Hegel's discussion of these sources does not only appear in the *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (1835), but also occupies a substantial number of pages in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), it is necessary to investigate these pages as well, particularly the section entitled "The Certainty and Truth of Reason." In this section, not only is it revealed that reason is the highest expression of spirit, but it is also here that Hegel evaluates the claims of two pseudo-sciences: physiognomy and phrenology.

In what follows, I argue that Hegel's understanding of physiognomy is more nuanced than commentators have generally maintained. What commentators have failed to address in their often detailed discussions of Hegel's critique of physiognomy in the *Phänomenologie* is that the topic of physiognomy makes a subsequent appearance in the *Ästhetik* where Hegel actually employs the methods of physiognomy in his discussion of the sculptural formation of the Greek profile.<sup>1</sup> The articles that concentrate on Hegel's treatment of physiognomy focus

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<sup>1</sup> Discussions of Hegel and physiognomy which do not address his treatment of physiognomy in the *Aesthetics* include, Alasdair MacIntyre, "Hegel on Faces and Skulls," in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Alasdair MacIntyre (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1976) 219–36; Michael Emerson, "Hegel on the Inner and the Outer," *Idealistic Studies* 17 (1987): 133–47, and a short

exclusively on the arguments Hegel sets forth in the *Phänomenologie* and pay no heed to Hegel's actual usage of the language and techniques of physiognomy in the *Ästhetik*. Consequently, these investigations miss the poignant *aesthetic* relevance Hegel attributes to the practices of physiognomy. What is of interest to me is not what Hegel rejects of physiognomy, but rather what he preserves of this "naive" science. It is the relevance of physiognomy, both for Hegel's explication of ideal beauty and for a general understanding of early nineteenth-century aesthetics, that I am interested in understanding.

What brings me to the second purpose of this chapter, a purpose which is considerably more general in scope? Using Hegel's discussion of physiognomy as a point of departure, I will briefly describe the elements of Enlightenment physiognomy, its themes and techniques, its relevance to neoclassical tastes, as well as its popular manifestations, so as to gauge the tremendous significance physiognomy had throughout Europe during Hegel's lifetime. In particular, I will discuss the fashionable interest in facial silhouettes which flourished in both Europe and America, an interest which was in large part a consequence of the rapid translation and international dissemination of Johann Caspar Lavater's physiognomic writings—the writings which provide the subtext for Hegel's discussion of the Greek profile. By better understanding Europe's prodigious physiognomic interest in interpreting profiles, which began in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and extended well into the mid-nineteenth century,<sup>2</sup> we can assemble a more accurate impression of what was at stake in Hegel's protracted

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discussion of the subject in Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (New York: Verso Press, 1989) 207–9.

<sup>2</sup> For evidence of the breadth and duration of physiognomic interests, one might turn to Charles Darwin's *Autobiography* where he mentions that the captain of the H. M. S. Beagle was a student of Lavater: "Afterwards, on becoming very intimate with [Robert] Fitz-Roy, I heard that I had run a very narrow risk of being rejected on account of the shape of my nose! He was an ardent disciple of Lavater, and was convinced that he could judge of a man's character by the outline of his features, and he doubted whether any one with my nose could possess sufficient energy and determination for the voyage." Charles Darwin, *Autobiography* (New York, 1950) 361. Quoted in John Graham, *Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1979) 85. Equally amusing are the references made to Lavater (and to Gall) in Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's *Physiologie du goût*. Illustrating, once again, just how pervasive the application of Lavater's theories were, Brillat-Savarin writes in a short section entitled "Predestined Gourmands": "I have always been a follower of Lavater and Gall: I believe in inborn tendencies. Since there are people who have obviously been put into the world to see badly, walk badly, hear badly [. . .] why can it not be that there are others who are meant to enjoy more deeply certain series of sensations?" and a paragraph later, "Human passions act on the muscles, and very often, no matter how much someone may hold his tongue, the various sentiments that surge in him can be plainly read on his face." See Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiognomy of Taste, Or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy*, trans. M. F. K. Fisher (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint Press, 1999) 160.

discussions of physiognomy and can better ascertain why Hegel extends to this pseudo-science, as well as to the related physiological studies of Petrus Camper, a predominantly aesthetic importance.

Finally, the third purpose of this article is to show how Hegel's use of both Lavater's physiognomy and Camper's theory of facial angles in analyzing the beauty of the Greek profile highlights a transformation in the European aesthetic theory. Hegel's discussion of artwork aesthetics places beauty on a decidedly quantitative footing which does not display the same relation to exemplarity that existed in the earlier eighteenth-century theories. In the middle of the eighteenth century, an approach to aesthetic value had been devised that foregrounded the dynamics of stylistic transformations. This art historical model, best typified in the writings of Johann Winckelmann, held not only that the work of art was inseparable from its historical conditions, but that the singularity of the work of art, in part because of the unique historical circumstances of its creation, could not be understood by conceptual analysis alone and instead required a receptivity to its status as an example of good taste. Beauty, in other words, was not something that could be expressed either in quantifiable terms or by means of analytic concepts. Seventy years after Johann Winckelmann wrote his famous essay on the imitation of the Greeks,<sup>3</sup> however, Hegel's discussion of these same Greek statues not only mentions nothing about imitation, but claims that their beauty is, in fact, measurable—both by means of Camper's facial angle theory and by employing Lavater's physiognomical method of discerning natural character "types." It is this quantitative aspect of Hegel's analysis of Greek art that begins to transform the aesthetic tradition by setting the stage for the general emergence of the social sciences and their reliance on quantitative analysis.

While one finds in Hegel an important shift to artwork aesthetics, that is, to a concern with the work of art rather than its reception or production, one also encounters a consequential shift in the meaning of the ideal in art, as well as a change in the social and philosophical function ideal beauty serves. Ideal beauty for Hegel is not at all the same as it was in Winckelmann, even though he invokes Winckelmann as a predecessor. The exemplary quality of the ideal that saturates

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<sup>3</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (Dresden, 1755). This text, along with Winckelmann's own anonymous attack on it and his own reply, both of which were designed to draw attention to the essay, were first translated into English by Henry (Johann Heinrich) Fuseli, the son of Winckelmann's friend Hans Casper Fuseli in 1765 as *Reflections on the Imitation of the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*. A more recent translation is Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, trans. Elfriede Heyer and Roger C. Norton (New York: State U of New York P, 1987). The standard edition of Winckelmann's work is Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Sämtliche Werke: Einzige vollständige Ausgabe*, ed. Joseph Eiselein, 12 vols. (Donauöschingen, 1825–29).

Winckelmann's notion of beauty is no longer present in Hegel and, as a consequence, the normative quality of art, its implicit invitation to be imitated, is largely absent. For Hegel, art has served its historical purpose and demands nothing more from us. There is no true normative dimension to Hegel's aesthetics because his analysis of art is overwhelmingly concerned with the significance art had in the past—that is, the earlier stages in the maturation of *Geist*—rather than the significance art might have for the future. The strictly progressive vision of Hegel's history prevents art from being for him what it was for Winckelmann, namely, a normative example pulled from the past to guide the cultural disposition of the present. Hegel's emphasis on the "end of art" draws Hegel into a descriptive analysis of art that merges with the descriptive scientific analyses of physiognomy and comparative anatomy. The determination of beauty, at least in the important passages I will be discussing, is given over to rules of geometric proportionality borrowed from anatomical science. Approached in this manner, the exemplarity of art dissolves into the measurable, statistical norms of science.

In this respect, Hegel's *Ästhetik* reflects the growing importance, expressed not only in Goethe and Herder, but also in the biological treatises of Maupertuis, Buffon and Vicq d'Azyr,<sup>4</sup> of the "natural type" (*Typus*) over the "ideal." The growing biological interest in typology, the theory that all natural forms embody common structural patterns, was being absorbed into aesthetic discourse. Though distinct in their methodologies, both Lavater and Camper aspire to distill out of natural plurality an underlying *gestalt* of both human and natural forms that withstand the turbulence of history. In an essay on the importance of natural types in eighteenth-century thought, H. B. Nisbet notes that the pursuit of natural types had implications far beyond biology.<sup>5</sup> "Literary criticism and literary history," he

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<sup>4</sup> Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, *Système de la nature* (1751); Comte de George-Louis Leclerc Buffon, *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du cabinet du roi*, 44 vols. (Paris: De l'Imprimerie Royale, 1749–1803); Johann Gotfried von Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Erster Entwurf einer allgemeinen Einleitung in die vergleichende Anatomie, ausgehend von der Osteologie* (1795), as well as *Zur Morphologie* (1817–24). Goethe spent much time attempting to isolate the natural plant-type and this material appears in his *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen* (1831), but it is also interesting to note that in 1824 Karl Friedrich Philipp Martius, professor of botany and director of the botanical gardens in München, published a similar text bearing the intriguing title, *Physiognomie des Pflanzenreiches* (1824). Buffon writes, for instance, that there is "un dessein primitif et général, qu'on peut suivre très loin, sur lequel tout semble avoir été conçu" (IV, 379). Quoted in H. B. Nisbet, "Herder, Goethe, and the Natural 'Type,'" *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 37 (1966): 85.

<sup>5</sup> In addition to being driven to discover natural types in the biological world, Goethe also set out to do the same for classical sculpture—and he did so by using physiognomical principles. While in Italy, Goethe attempted to construct a composite model of Greek beauty by abstracting from all

writes, “in describing genres and historical styles, cannot indeed avoid typological criteria,”<sup>6</sup> and of course the same can be said for the plastic arts. The shift from the norm as a singular, inimitable ideal, to the norm as a carefully distilled average transpires in the years between Winckelmann and Hegel and it is this shift that also undermines the importance of the exemplarity of aesthetic objects.

In Hegel, art ends twice. The end of art is not only to be found in Hegel’s parable of *Geist* which leaves the ancient aesthetic world behind as it journeys on to more noble pursuits of the mind, but can also be located in the *cultural* fallout of Hegel’s insistence on art’s noble obsolescence. It is Hegel’s discussion of the end of art, proposed during the first decade of the nineteenth century, that begins to strip art of the exemplary value that had been attributed to it in the neo-classical cultural milieu of the eighteenth century. In some sense, then, the exemplarity of art, that exemplarity which in the eighteenth century made aesthetic taste the benchmark of civil society, ends with Hegel the moment he announces that art has already served its world-historical purpose. Art, as no longer being relevant to human progress, ceases to be exemplary and remains only a matter of description, not prescription. One of the manifestations of this historical obsolescence is the degree to which beauty can be submitted to an explanation via quantification and measurement. As I intend to show, the facial angle of Camper, the simple measurement of two intersecting lines, and the physiognomic classifications of Lavater, both of which Hegel’s openly adopts, are just such quantifications. But before turning to the *Ästhetik*, I will provide a brief review of Hegel’s discussion of both physiognomy and phrenology as they appear in the *Phänomenologie*.

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classical sculptures their salient features. As Nicholas Boyle explains, in 1788 Goethe devised a plan to, first, “identify and eliminate from study all those images of Greek gods known to be modeled on historical characters, and then to use physiognomical principles on the remainder to determine the physical features by which the ancients represented their moral and aesthetic ideals. (No human characteristics, Goethe argued, was ever purely represented by a single real individual: the perfect humanity found in Minerva or Apollo must have been drawn not from one model, but from many)” (p. 547). Goethe planned to travel to Rome where, provided he could secure adequate funding, he estimated that the project could be completed in 10 years. See Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992). H. B. Nisbet also makes reference to Goethe’s search for a composite “type” in classical sculpture. See Nisbet, “Herder, Goethe, and the Natural ‘Type,’ ” 100.

<sup>6</sup> Nisbet, “Herder, Goethe, and the Natural ‘Type,’ ” *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 37 (1966): 118. On the importance of typology in the development of nonbiological areas of study Nisbet cites, W. Hass, “Of Living Things,” *GLL* 10 (1956): 85.

## II.

In the section entitled “The Certainty and Truth of Reason” in *Phänomenologie des Geistes*,<sup>7</sup> Hegel begins his account of that transformation in self-consciousness whereby the individual which has been conscious of itself only *oppositionally*, passes on to a *rational* relationship with that which is other than itself. Through reason, self-consciousness becomes aware that the external world is the very field of its activity and that consciousness is, in fact, constitutive of reality insofar as the apparent separation between consciousness and its object resides entirely within the domain of consciousness. This shift from understanding otherness as confrontational to understanding otherness as the product of self-consciousness provides Hegel with his first opportunity to conceptualize “idealism,” and the content of this idealism, the manner in which reason recognizes itself as constitutive of the world, is worked out in three subsequent sections of the *Phänomenologie*. The first of these sections deals with the various *observational* activities of reason and it is with this stage of idealism that I shall be most concerned.<sup>8</sup>

Hegel’s analysis of observational reason begins with the inorganic, moves to organic being, and concludes with the observation of self-consciousness itself. In each of these instances, observational reason is to be understood not as a means of knowing the world, but as a mode of transforming the world into a set of representations structured in conformity with specific laws provided by reason. “*Observing is not knowing itself*,” Hegel writes, “and is ignorant of it; it converts its own nature into the form of *being*.”<sup>9</sup> Reason is, therefore, not passive vis-à-vis reality. And while reason discovers itself in the world it does so only as a thing, which, as we shall see, terminates dialectically in the observational project of phrenology, where spirit literally appears to itself as a bone.

When reason finally turns its attention to organic being, it discovers that organic life is not capable of being brought under specific laws because its nature is too variable to correspond to rigid rules. Nevertheless, reason attempts to establish a law that describes the relation between organic being and its environment, that is, between the organic and the inorganic, and the formulation of this law is grounded on the fact that organic being presents itself to reason in two forms: a visible

<sup>7</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977). All references to the German edition are from the collected works, Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970) III.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Emerson’s essay, “Hegel on the Inner and the Outer” has been very useful in organizing the presentation of the summary which follows. See Emerson, “Hegel on the Inner and the Outer,” *Idealistic Studies* 17 (1987): 133–47.

<sup>9</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 181.

surface and a concealed essence. In order for reason to come to know the essence of organic nature it must gain access to what is concealed from observation, and to do so reason must presume a correspondence between the *inner* essence of the organic and the observable *outer* manifestation of that essence. Thus, the new law through which reason tries to subdivide all organic nature is premised on the notion that the outer reveals the content of the inner. “Thus,” Hegel writes, “we see the Notion taken to mean roughly the *inner*, and actuality the *outer*; and their relation produces the law that *the outer is the expression of the inner*.”<sup>10</sup> It is the formulation of this law that sets the stage for Hegel’s engagement with physiognomy and will reappear in his discussion of classical sculpture.

It comes as no surprise, however, that this explanatory law also falls short of the mark. The very structure of the organic does not permit the systemization of its external parts because, as stable as these might be, the internal functions to which they purportedly refer are dynamic. As Hegel explains, “because those simple moments [i.e., the internal functions of the organism] are pervasive fluid properties, they do not have in the organic things such a separate, real expression as what is called an individual system of shape [*System der Gestalt*].”<sup>11</sup> The only way such a correspondence between inner and outer could proceed would be if the inner were understood as fixed and determinate which, as Hegel points out, would result in merely transforming the organic into the inorganic, the living into the dead. Organic existence and law are incompatible. While law assumes regularity, organic life presupposes dynamism. Hegel explains,

In the system of *shape* [*Systemen der Gestalt*] as such, the organism is apprehended from the abstract aspect of a dead existence; its moments so taken pertain to anatomy and the corpse, not to cognition and the living organism. In such parts, the moments have really ceased *to be*, for they cease to be process.<sup>12</sup>

It is for this reason that Hegel concludes, “the idea of a *law* in the case of organic being is altogether lost.”<sup>13</sup>

The failure of this law of organic being, the failure, that is, of the rule that the outer is the expression of the inner, paves the way for Hegel’s discussion of reason’s observation of self-consciousness in which interiority is once again observed via its external expression, only this time the external surface upon which the inner is expressed is the human body itself. It is at this stage that Hegel introduces a critique of the methodological concerns of Lavater and his physiognomy.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid: 159–60.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid: 166.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid: 166.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid: 167.

## III.

Early in the *Physiognomische Fragmente*,<sup>14</sup> in the first volume of a lavishly illustrated four-volume set, Lavater defines physiognomy as “the science of knowledge of the correspondences between the external and the internal man, the visible superficialities and the invisible contents.”<sup>15</sup> The fundamental principle Lavater sets down in his physiognomic writings not only stipulates that a person’s outward appearance, whether taken as a whole or in parts, is the faithful manifestation of his or her inner character, but also includes an important aesthetic corollary, namely, that beauty and ugliness are expressions of virtue and vice respectively. It is this latter tenet, that beauty is indicative of virtue, which endures

<sup>14</sup> The initial set of Johann Caspar Lavater’s *Physiognomische Fragmente* was published in Germany in 1775–78 as Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente, zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe*, ed. J. M. Armbruster [Lavater’s secretary], 4 vols. (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, H. Steiner und Companie, 1775–78). The expanded French version first appeared in Hague in 1781–1803 as Lavater, *Essai sur la physionomie, destiné à faire connoître l’homme et à le faire aimer*, traduit Mme de la Fite, M. Caillard et M. H. Renfer (La Haye: 1781–1803). It was this French edition that served as the source text for the lavish English translation by Henry Hunter and is the edition from which, unless otherwise noted, I have quoted. See Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, trans. Henry Hunter, 5 vols. (London: John Murray and Thomas Holloway, 1789–98). By 1810, in fewer than 40 years since its first printing, there was a total of 57 editions published in six languages. For a comprehensive, book length account of the publication history of the *Physiognomische Fragmente*, see John Graham, *Lavater’s Essays on Physiognomy: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1979); also Graham, *The Development of the Use of Physiognomy in the Novel* (Ph.D. dissertation, The Johns Hopkins University, 1960). For a summation of these accounts see Graham, “Lavater’s Physiognomy in England,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22 (1961): 561–72; and Graham, “Lavater’s Physiognomy: A Checklist,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 55 (1961): 297–308.

<sup>15</sup> Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, trans. Henry Hunter (London: John Murray and Thomas Holloway, 1789–98) I, 11. The entry in Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* reads “physio’gnomy. The art of discovering the temper, and fore-knowing the fortune by the features of the face.” Samuel Johnson, *Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary: A Modern Selection*, ed. E. L. McAdam Jr. and George Milne (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963). In illustration of the instinctual and ubiquitous practice of physiognomics, Lavater writes: “Do we not daily judge of the sky by its physiognomy? No food, not a glass of wine, or beer, not a cup of coffee, or tea, comes to the table, which is not judged by its physiognomy, its exterior; and of which we do not thence deduce some conclusion respecting its interior, good, or bad, properties” (p. 16). Patrizia Magli suggests that the ancient art of physiognomics may have had its origin in the theatre: “An odd coincidence exists between the stiff facial masks of ancient actors, which set expressions according to a few symbolic representations, recognizable even at a distance, and ancient physiognomics, with its interest in the stable and lasting traits of a face, as separate from the passions that might move it.” See Magli, “The Face and the Soul,” in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michel Feher (New York: Zone Books, 1989) II, 90–91.

as a consistent theme of aesthetic theories throughout the long eighteenth century, and which Lavater's physiognomy helps to propagate.

But Lavater did not invent physiognomy. Tradition attributes the first formal study of physiognomy to Pythagoras, though Galen contends that it was actually Hippocrates who established physiognomy as a science and brought it under the scope of medical knowledge.<sup>16</sup> Aristotle too was a student of physiognomy, and in the concluding paragraphs of the *Prior Analytics* he claims that if one can ascertain the affection proper to each genus of animal and the sign that necessarily indicates that affection, one can then use these signs to judge an individual's nature and "infer character from physical features."<sup>17</sup> And it is in this context that Aristotle adopts the Greek term *physiognōmonein* to indicate "judging the nature of something based on its body structure."<sup>18</sup> Interest in this practice was kept alive throughout the Renaissance and the early modern period in numerous works, including those of Albertus Magnus, Giambattista della Porta, and Charles Le Brun,<sup>19</sup> many of whom advanced their theories in consort with *De physiognomonica*,<sup>20</sup> a text whose authorship was erroneously attributed to Aristotle, but which nevertheless remained part of the *Corpus Aristotelicum* and was considered the standard work on physiognomy until the late eighteenth century when Lavater's *Fragmente* assumed its rank.

The degree to which Lavater's writings took hold of European popular imagination during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is hard to

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth C. Evans, "Roman Descriptions of Personal Appearance in History and Biography," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 46 (1935): 47. See also, Graeme Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel: Faces and Fortunes* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982) 36; and Magli, "The Face and the Soul," in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michel Feher (New York: Zone Books, 1989) II, 89.

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, 113. (70b14).

<sup>18</sup> The term *physiognōmonein* derives from *physis* (nature) and *gnōmōn* (interpretation), and literally refers to the "interpretation of nature." Giovanni Battista della Porta, however, points out that *gnōmōn* also means "rule" or "law" and, thus, physiognomics might also be understood as the "rule of nature." Della Porta goes on to say that by following a particular rule or order of nature, we can know "particular passions of the soul from the particular shape of the body [*ex tali corporis forma tales animae affectiones consequantur*]." See Magli, "The Face and the Soul," in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michel Feher (New York: Zone Books, 1989) II, 87.

<sup>19</sup> Albertus Magnus, *De animalibus*, Giambattista della Porta, *De humana physiognomonica* (1586), and Charles Le Brun, *Conférence sur l'impression des différents caractères des passions* (1667).

<sup>20</sup> The work known as *De physiognomonica*, or alternately as *Secretum Secretorum*, was traditionally attributed to Aristotle and was considered to be a series of suggestions Aristotle gave to Alexander the Great concerning his selection of councilors. The third century BCE peripatetic text is now thought to have been composed by an unknown author. See Aristotle, *Physiognomonics*, trans. T. Loveday and E. S. Forster, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984) I, 1237–50. For studies concerning the authenticity of this text see *Die Aristotelische Physiognomik*, ed. and trans. M. Schneidewin (Heidelberg, 1928).

overestimate. Its publication history alone testifies to the astonishing impact it had on European intellectual culture. The first edition of the *Fragmente* was published in 1775 and within 40 years at least 57 editions, priced to accommodate all budgets, had been printed in upward of seven languages. Twenty editions appeared in England alone, including the opulent Henry Hunter translation which included over 800 engravings.<sup>21</sup> Readership was broadly distributed and as John Graham, who has chronicled Lavater's publication history, concludes, "The book was reprinted, abridged, summarized, pirated, parodied, imitated and reviewed so often that it is difficult to imagine how a literate person of the time could have failed to have some general knowledge of the man and his theories."<sup>22</sup> In fact, in 1801, the year when Lavater died, a leading British periodical, *The Scots Magazine*, acknowledged that he had been, "for many years, one of the most famous men in Europe,"<sup>23</sup> and London's *The Gentleman's Magazine* went so far as to say that,

In Switzerland, in Germany, in France, even in Britain, all the world became passionate admirers of the Physiognomical Science of Lavater. His books, published in the German language, were multiplied by many editions. In the enthusiasm with which they were studied and admired, they were thought as necessary in every family as even the Bible itself.<sup>24</sup>

It was, then, in the midst of the tremendous impact that physiognomy was having on European popular imagination that Hegel opted to include the ideas of Lavater in the pages of his *Phänomenologie* in the form of a sustained critique of Lavater's in his *Phänomenologie*.

#### IV.

Having been unable to satisfactorily ascribe to both language and gesture a legislative role in governing the expression of the inner through the forms of the

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<sup>21</sup> Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind*, trans. Henry Hunter, 5 vols. (London: John Murray and Thomas Holloway, 1789–98). The Hunter English translation expanded Lavater's work into five meticulous quarto volumes, fully illustrated with, as the title page proudly announces, "more than eight hundred engravings accurately copied," both from the original edition as well as from drawings furnished by the Swiss-born British painter Johann Heinrich Fuseli. In 1800, *The Monthly Magazine* praised this edition as "the finest printed book which has ever appeared in this or any other country." See Graham, *Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1979) 45, 62.

<sup>22</sup> Graham, *Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1979) 62.

<sup>23</sup> *The Scots Magazine* 63 (1801): 79. Quoted in Graham, *Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1979) 85.

<sup>24</sup> *The Gentelmann's Magazine* 71 (February 1801): 124. Quoted in Graham, *Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1979) 85.

outer, because speech and actions have only an *arbitrary* connection with what they express, reason turns to physiognomy which promises to locate in the body's visible idiosyncrasies, and more specifically in the geometry of the face, an authentic correspondence between the exterior and the interior. Since the structure of the face is less malleable than language and gestures, reason assumes a more immediate connection between an individual's character and his or her external expressions.

To the outer whole, therefore, belongs not only the original being, the inherited body, but equally the formation of the body resulting from the activities of the inner being: the body is the unity of the unshaped and the shaped being [*er ist Einheit des ungebildeten und des gebildeten Seins*], and is the individual's actuality permeated by his being-for-itself.<sup>25</sup>

The external features and facial lineaments of an individual are said to be the manifestations of an individual's distinct character insofar as these facial features are the direct expression of an individual's attitude toward his or her own actions. The interiority that facial features reveal is, in Hegel's words, an inner "which in its [outer] expression remains inner [*welches in seiner Äußerung Inneres bleibt*],"<sup>26</sup> and this is precisely what physiognomy promises to demonstrate.

Hegel, however, identifies in physiognomy's methodological project two inconsistencies, the first of which is reminiscent of his critique of linguistic and gesticular expressions, namely, that though outward facial appearances may well be the externalization of inner being, there is ultimately nothing but a contingent correlation between these particular facial traits and what they signify. "[T]he particular way in which the content is expressed is a matter of complete indifference [*vollkommen gleichgültig*] so far as the content itself is concerned."<sup>27</sup> Given this contingency, there is no science. Second, reason's inclination to treat the outer as an expression of the inner has the effect of devaluing the outer by regarding it as an unessential symptom of inner motivations. This second inconsistency proves most consequential.

By regarding the deed, the outer activity, as unessential, physiognomy mistakenly identifies the intention behind the deed to be the bearer of an individual's true essence, that is, "the intention is supposed to have its more or less *unessential* expression in the deed."<sup>28</sup> Physiognomy grounds its interpretive practice on the mere *intentionality*, which merely *seems* to have a physical reality in facial traits, and thus dismisses as superfluous the actual deeds themselves. Thus, to borrow one of Hegel's examples, it is not the murderer who is recognized by the

<sup>25</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 186.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*: 190.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*: 192.

physiognomist in some set of particular facial traits, but “the *capacity to be one*.”<sup>29</sup> By applying its methodology to the fixed and determinate features of the face, physiognomy assumes that it has a rigorous empiricism on its hands. The problem, however, is that because the interior sentiments of an individual are unfixed, an observational analysis of the exterior expression of these sentiments in the fixed geometry of the face can never be adequate to the task and will always invite conjectural results.

It is only the accomplished deed itself that can do away with these conjectures. Here Hegel invokes an example provided by Georg Christoph Lichtenberg in his *Über Physiognomik* to better illustrate the erroneousness of ascribing more demonstrative value to facial traits than to actual deeds. He writes,

If anyone said, “You certainly act like an honest man, but I see from your face that you are forcing yourself to do so and are a rogue at heart;” without a doubt, every honest fellow to the end of time, when thus addressed, will retort with a box on the ears.<sup>30</sup>

The point being, of course, that the true essence of the individual resides in his or her deeds, and it is in these that one is actual. The deed does away with

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Georg Christoph Lichtenberg takes this sentiment to its logical conclusion in his *Über Physiognomik wider die Physiognomen*: “If physiognomy becomes what Lavater expects it to become then children will be hanged before they have committed the deeds which deserve the gallows.” Quoted in R. J. Shroyer, “Introduction,” in *Aphorisms on Man*, ed. R. J. Shroyer (Delmar, NY: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1980) x.

<sup>30</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 193. Hegel cites Lichtenberg, *Über Physiognomik wider die Physiognomen* (Göttingen, 1778). Along with Friedrich Nicolai, Lichtenberg was the best known of Lavater’s contemporary critics. It must be kept in mind, however, that neither of these men was decidedly against the idea of physiognomy itself. In fact, as Tytler has chronicled, both Nicolai and Lichtenberg not only had a long standing interest in physiognomy, but had actually written or lectured on the subject. Nicolai was, from early on, in direct correspondence with Lavater and eventually went on to publish his own book on physiognomy entitled, *Bändchen physiognomischer Betrachtungen*, portions of which eventually appeared in the fourth volume of Lavater’s *Physiognomische Fragmente*. In the case of Nicolai, what he objected to in Lavater’s work was both its religious overtones and above all its implicit determinism. In this, Nicolai shares critical ground not only with Lichtenberg, but also with Hegel. Lichtenberg’s association with physiognomy was no less personal. As a highly esteemed physicist, Lichtenberg presented several lectures on the subject at the Göttingen Historical Society in 1765, but remained critical of Lavater’s deterministic model. Lichtenberg’s disagreements are set forth most attentively in his paradoxically entitled book, *Über Physiognomik wider die Physiognomen*, which was published in 1771, and expanded in 1778. The central argument of this text, which is echoed by Hegel, is that physical appearances are highly deceptive and thus it is better to judge a person’s character by way of his actions rather than through his facial features. For a highly informative and contextualized account of Lichtenberg and Nicolai, see Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel: Faces and Fortunes* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982) 76–78. For a study of the Lavater–Lichtenberg dispute and Zimmermann’s defense of Lavater, see J. P. Stern, *Lichtenberg: A Doctrine of Scattered Occasions Reconstructed from His Aphorisms and Reflections* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1963).

arbitrary abstractions because “its being is not merely a sign, but the fact itself [*ihr Sein ist nicht nur ein Zeichen, sondern die Sache selbst*].”<sup>31</sup> And furthermore, the deed is not only what *it* is, but also constitutes what *the individual* is, that is, “the individual human being *is* what the *deed is* [. . .] [T]he deed alone [. . .] must be affirmed as his *genuine being*—not his face or outward appearance, which is supposed to express what he ‘means’ by his deeds, or what anyone might suppose he merely *could* do.”<sup>32</sup>

The error of physiognomy and, more broadly, of observational reason in general, does not lie in its drawing incorrect correspondences between outer traits and inner sentiments, but rather in the positing of these two distinct realms which then demand, by the sheer fact of being posited, a meaningful connection between them. “What is wrong,” Hyppolite contends, “is observing reason’s practice of isolating exterior and interior, and then claiming that they correspond.”<sup>33</sup> Reason sets out to establish the laws that determine this correspondence, not recognizing that the entire necessity to find a correspondence is the result of an ultimately false distinction between interiority and exteriority.

Reason does not become fully cognizant of the futility of this surface-depth model until reason moves from the techniques of Lavater’s physiognomy to those of Franz Josef Gall’s phrenology.<sup>34</sup> It is in the practice of phrenology, where the object of observational reason is the human skull, that reason recognizes the presumptiveness of its aim. The bone of the skull can in no way be taken as an active sign or expression of conscious individuality because it is, quite evidently, a purely static *thing*. While observational reason does, nonetheless, claim to find in this pure thing the exterior expression of spirit, it cannot maintain this position for long without confronting the paradox that lays at its heart, namely, the requirement that spirit and bone be the same thing. Hegel explains,

The skull-bone is not an organ of activity, nor even a “speaking” movement. We neither commit theft, murder, etc. with the skull-bone, nor does it in the least betray such deeds by changing a countenance, so that the skull-bone would become a speaking gesture. [. . .] The skull-bone just

<sup>31</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 194.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, 268.

<sup>34</sup> Franz Joseph Gall, a physician by training, invented the technique of cerebral localization—later called “organology”—whereby the division of the brain into faculties could be analyzed by a careful examination of cranial measurements, “cranioscopy.” This procedure was soon referred to as phrenology, but the name was not coined by Gall himself. Johann Georg Spurzheim, a student of Gall, popularized the term which was first used by Thomas Foster. Gall’s most important work, co-written with Spurzheim, is, Gall and Spurzheim, *Anatomie et physiologie du système en général et du cerveau en particulier*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1810).

by itself is such an indifferent, natural thing that nothing else is to be directly seen in it, or fancied about it, than simply the bone itself.<sup>35</sup>

The conclusion which is drawn from phrenology's study of cranial bumps—that “the *being of Spirit is a bone*”<sup>36</sup>—demands an impossible conflation and thus propels the dialectic forward, bringing to a close reason's observational concern with the outer as an expression of the inner. While the discussion of phrenology terminates at this point in the *Phänomenologie*, the drive to establish laws that might warrant such a correspondence is not to be taken lightly. What reason sought here was nothing short of the realization of idealism itself, the instantiation of reason in being.<sup>37</sup> And as we will see, this same dilemma concerning the relation of the inner to the outer, which confers to reason its earliest formulation of idealism, returns again in the *Ästhetik* where sculpture, and more specifically, the classical Greek profile, becomes a vehicle for the adequate external materialization of spirit. Before examining Hegel's aesthetic treatment of the classical profile, however, it is worth considering the influential role profiles were playing both in European cultural life and in Lavater's physiognomy.

## V.

Lavater's earliest thoughts on physiognomy evolved while he was still preparing to become a minister in the Zurich Reform Church and were conceived in collaboration with his classmate, Johann Heinrich Fuseli,<sup>38</sup> who in addition to being ordained with Lavater in 1762, would eventually furnish many of the illustrations included in the *Fragmente*.<sup>39</sup> But it was Lavater's friendship with the court

<sup>35</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 200–1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*: 208.

<sup>37</sup> Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 270.

<sup>38</sup> Johann Heinrich Fuseli was a Swiss-born painter and art critic. After settling in London in March of 1764, he changed his name from Füssli to Fuseli. While there he was encouraged by Sir Joshua Reynolds to go to Italy (1770–78) and eventually became professor of painting at the Royal Academy, and Keeper in 1804. For a study of the collaboration between Fuseli and Lavater, see Marcia Allentuck, “Fuseli and Lavater's Physiognomical Theory and the Enlightenment,” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 4 (1967): 89–112.

<sup>39</sup> Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel: Faces and Fortunes* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982) 21. Tytler gives the ordination date of 1762, as does R. J. Shroyer, while Barbara Stafford and Carol Lewis Hall list 1761. See R. J. Shroyer, “Introduction,” in *Aphorisms on Man*, ed. R. J. Shroyer (Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1980) vi; Barbara Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993) 91; and Carol Louise Hall, *Blake and Fuseli: A Study in the Transmission of Ideas* (New York: Garland Press, 1985) 17. See also Jean Turner, “Fuseli and Lavater: The Personification of Character,” *Athanon* 4 (1985): 34.

physician Johann Zimmermann that precipitated his serious study of physiognomy. It was Zimmermann who, after overhearing Lavater make an impressive physiognomic analysis of a soldier marching in a parade, would write to him and say, simply, “You absolutely must write a book on physiognomy.”<sup>40</sup> Lavater took the advice and when this book, the *Fragmente*, was finally written, it was Zimmermann who was responsible for the administrative side of the publication.

The book Lavater wrote was, as the title indicates, a compellation of fragments, passages on physiognomy compiled from both historical sources and solicited contributors. Herder, who had already published an essay entitled “Is the Beauty of the Body the Bearer of the Beauty of the Soul?,”<sup>41</sup> contributed writings, as did Johann Sulzer, Johann Heinrich Merck, and both Jakob Lenz and Goethe, each of whom furnished Lavater with scores of facial drawings and silhouettes—physiognomy’s most important raw material. The practice of painting profiles from their shadows, also referred to as “profilographs,” first became fashionable in genteel circles during the 1760s when, according to Graeme Tytler, people took considerable pleasure in exchanging silhouettes with friends and lovers.<sup>42</sup> However, even given this existing fashionable interest in silhouettes, the exchange of profiles soared in popularity after the publication of the *Fragmente*,<sup>43</sup> which is profusely illustrated with them (Figures 1 and 2).

We are told by Lavater that these simple black profiles represent “the immediate impress of nature,”<sup>44</sup> and bare “a character of originality which the most dexterous artist could not hit, to the same degree of perfection, in a drawing from

<sup>40</sup> The letter is dated January 22, 1767 and the passage reads, “*Du musst absolut eine Physiognomik schreiben.*” Quoted in Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*, 56. I have slightly altered the translation. Tytler’s source is Oliver Guinaudeau, *Jean-Gaspard Lavater, Études sur sa vie et sa pensée jusqu’en 1786* (Paris, 1924) 611. Lavater’s physiognomical readings were not always so impressive. Lavater’s characterization of a well-respected military cadet as a rascal inspired Schiller to write the poem *Grabschrift*. See Friedrich von Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Otto Grüntter and Georg Witkowski (Leipzig, 1901–11) III, 262.

<sup>41</sup> Johann Gottfried von Herder, “Ist die Schönheit des Körpers ein Bote von der Schönheit der Seele?,” (1766). Herder’s contribution to the *Fragmente* consisted of the first portion of *Die älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts* (1774). For a discussion of Herder’s contribution, see Reinhold Steig, “Herders Verhältnis zu Lavaters *Physiognomischen Fragmenten*,” *Euphorion* 1 (1894): 540–57. See also Herder’s several reviews of the *Fragmente*, *Herder’s Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1892) IX, 411–24, 442–70.

<sup>42</sup> Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*, 57. The silhouette has a surprisingly recent origin. The silhouette was “invented” by a Controller General of Finance under Louis XV whose name was, in fact, Etienne de Silhouette.

<sup>43</sup> On the silhouette and its history see Peggy Hickman, *Silhouettes: A Living Art* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1975), and Jean-Claude Lemagny and André-Rouillé, ed., *A History of Photography: Social and Cultural Perspectives*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 12–17.

<sup>44</sup> Johann Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, II, 177.

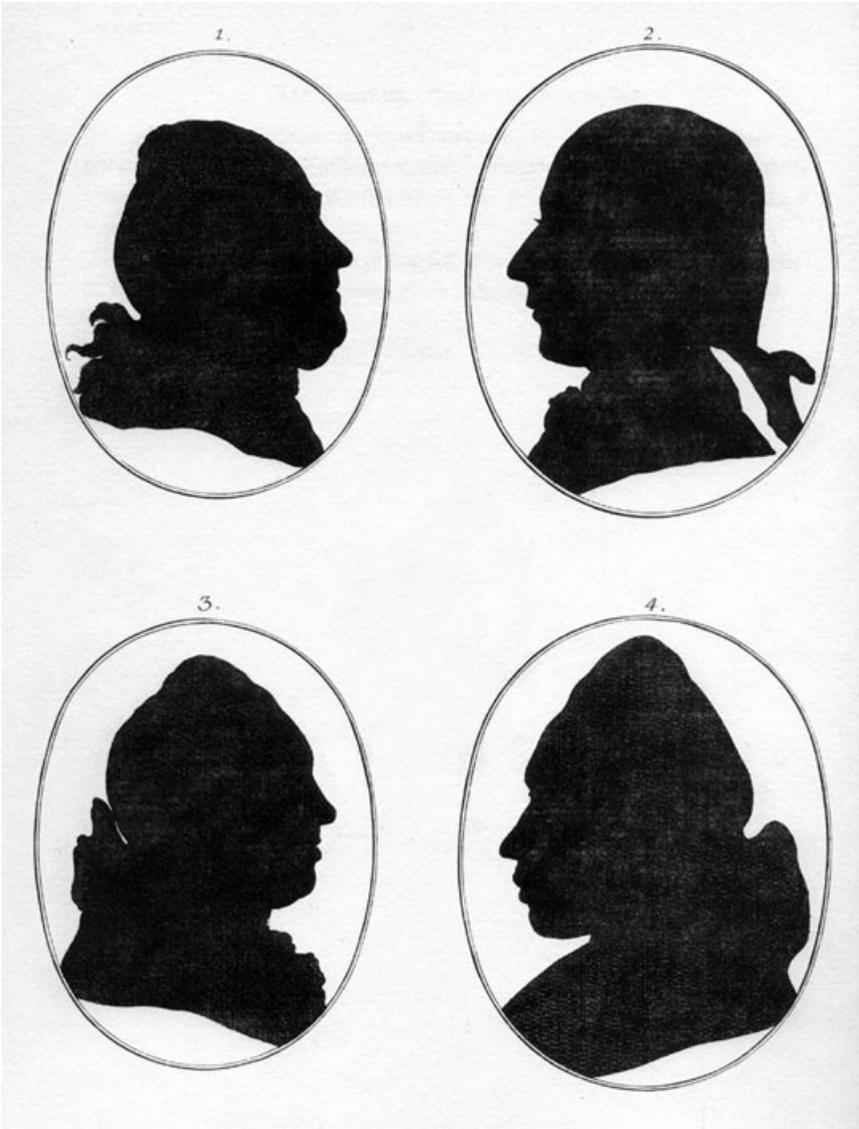


Figure 1

THE GREEK PROFILE

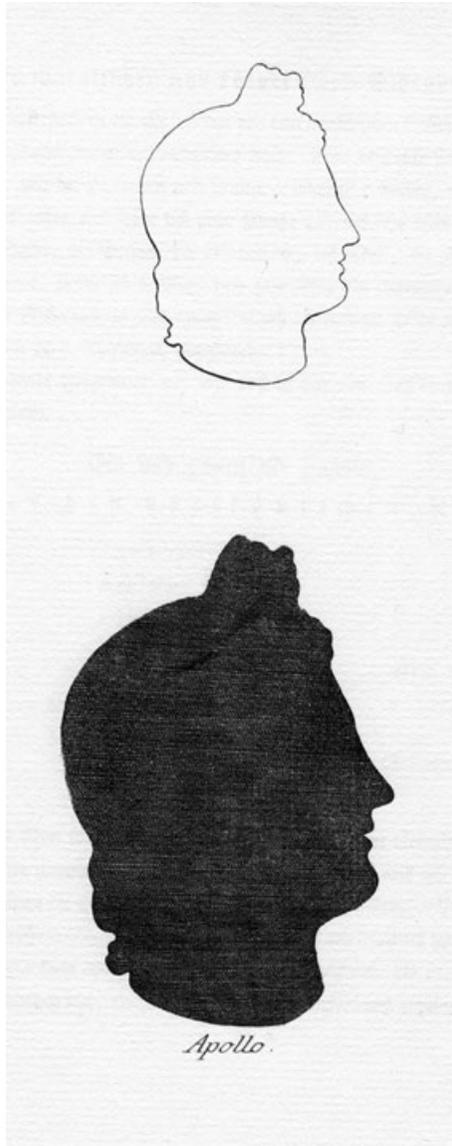


Figure 2

the hand.”<sup>45</sup> Although freely admitting that silhouettes were the least finished of portraits, Lavater maintained that they were also “the justest and most faithful.”<sup>46</sup> The simple image with “neither motion, nor light, nor volume, nor features,”<sup>47</sup> enabled the physiognomist to concentrate on only the most salient facial traits. Not surprisingly, Lavater amassed an enormous collection of profiles and actively solicited them from notable people throughout Europe. According to Peggy Hickman, it was not long before “[p]eople all over Europe sent him profiles hoping for a flattering interpretation.”<sup>48</sup> And as Hickman goes on to explain, with Lavater there arose “a new demand for more reliable and accurate means of making silhouettes. For a slip of the scissors or brush might show too full a mouth, sloping forehead, or lack of chin which might be read as a sign of inner weakness.”<sup>49</sup> The problem was solved when, assisted by Goethe, Lavater designed a special profilist’s chair which kept sitters in a stable position while their shadows were being traced (Figure 3).<sup>50</sup>

In addition to assisting Lavater with his special chair, Goethe made significant contributions to the *Fragmente* and knew Lavater quite well.<sup>51</sup> After having been deeply impressed by Goethe’s *Letter of the Pastor to His Colleague*, Lavater began, in August of 1773, a lively correspondence with its author. In fact, Goethe devotes the entire 14th section of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* to his earliest

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Lavater also states, following a common belief of the eighteenth century, that it is likely that drawing and painting originated from the tracing of silhouettes. For more on this subject and, in particular, on the myth of the Corinthian Maid, see Ann Bermingham, “The Origin of Painting and the Ends of Art: Wright of Derby’s *Corinthian Maid*,” in *Painting and the Politics of Culture: New Essays on British Art 1700–1850*, ed. John Barrel (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992). See also Robert Rosenblum, “The Origin of Painting: A Problem in the Iconography of Romantic Classicism,” *The Art Bulletin*, 39 (December, 1957): 279–90; and George Levitine, “Addenda to Robert Roseblum’s, ‘The Origin of Painting: A Problem in the Iconography of Romantic Classicism,’” *The Art Bulletin*, 40 (December, 1958): 329–31.

<sup>48</sup> Hickman, *Silhouettes: A Living Art* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1975) 18.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid: 19.

<sup>50</sup> Another, slightly later, mechanism for accurately and rapidly rendering profiles was Gilles Louis Chrétien’s physionotrace.

<sup>51</sup> Goethe’s contributions to Lavater’s *Physiognomische Fragmente* appear in Goethe’s collected works. See Goethe, “Naturgeschichtlicher Beitrag zu Lavaters Physiognomischen Fragmenten,” in *Johann Wolfgang Goethe Sämtliche Werke: Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, ed. Dorothea Kuhn (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987) XXIV, 11–15. For a study of the contributions Goethe made to Lavater’s project, see Ludwig Hirzel, “Goethes Anteil an Lavaters Physiognomik,” *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 21 (1877): 254–58; as well as Eduard von den Hellen, *Goethes Anteil an Lavaters Physiognomischen Fragmenten* (Frankfurt, 1888).



Figure 3

encounters with Lavater and speaks quite highly of him. Later in life, however, Goethe, who never discounted the long-term viability of physiognomy, nor the genuine sagacity of Lavater, did express pointed criticisms of his method. In the penultimate chapter of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe writes,

He was neither thinker nor poet; not even an orator in the proper sense of the term. In no way in a condition to apprehend anything methodically, he seized securely on the individual things and set them boldly near one another; his great physiognomical work is a striking example and testimony of this. Doubtless in himself the conception of the moral and the sensual man might form a whole; but outside himself he did not know how to represent this idea, except practically in individual cases, as he had comprehended the individual in life.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Goethe, *Poetry and Truth from My Own Life*, trans. R. O. Moon (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1949) 667.

And a paragraph later, speaking of the *Fragmente*,

[. . .] it formed no series, one thing followed another accidentally; there was nowhere a leading onward or referring back to be found.<sup>53</sup>

The reservations Goethe expresses are not uncommon, though it must be emphasized that these criticisms were leveled far more at Lavater's personal attempts to transform the ancient art of physiognomy into a modern science, than they were at the general possibility of eventually constituting such a science. In fact, Lavater himself often couches his own limitations, and the shortcomings of his method, in an optimistic vision of what the fledgling science would eventually become.

In her recent book on Petrus Camper, a figure whose theories of facial proportions Hegel explicitly adopts, Miriam Meijer points out that Camper himself also saw tremendous practical value in a science capable of deducing dispositions from external features, and like Lavater, believed that physiognomy, which was a science still in its infancy, held great promise. Toward this end, in 1769 Camper wrote a pseudonymous essay entitled "Investigation on Whether the Art of Judging Human Character from Exterior Appearance Could be Further Perfected," in which he remarks that physiognomy could and ought to be made into an empirical science. He writes that "although a series of observations has guided us to decide, which Nations are inferior, lazy, cowardly, malicious or barbarous, we still lack the science to judge a person's character from his facial features and corporeal grace."<sup>54</sup>

While it is Camper's work on the so-called "facial angle" that Hegel invokes in the *Ästhetik*, a theory I will discuss shortly, Camper was nevertheless receptive to the physiognomic project and his own work was regularly seen as contributing to its advancement. Indeed, cognizant of his own lack of scientific training, Lavater himself invokes Camper's expertise throughout the *Fragmente*.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Even given these criticisms, two pages later Goethe quotes Lavater's entire physiognomical analysis of the Stolberg brothers excerpted from the 13th fragment of the *Fragmente*. We are told by Lavater that the Stolberg brothers were, "the first men who ever sat and stood to me as one would sit to a painter for physiognomical description" (p. 669).

<sup>54</sup> Petrus Camper, "Investigation on Whether the Art of Judging Human Character from Exterior Appearance Could be Further Perfected." The text was originally published in Dutch as, "Onderzoek van de kunst om der menschen geaardheid, uit hun uitwendig voorkoomen op te maaken niet tot grooter volmaaktheid zou te brengen zyn," *De Philosoph 4* (1769): 257–64. Quoted in Miriam Claude Meijer, *Race and Aesthetics in the Anthropology of Petrus Camper* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999) 118. Six years earlier, in a brief digression in his book entitled, *On the Physical Upbringing of Children*, Camper also writes that, "It appears to me not improbable that the soul's inclinations and the sharpness of intelligence depend somewhat on the bodily form: one can pretty much always judge from the face and principally from the eyes." See Camper, *On the Physical Upbringing of Children* (1763). Quoted in Meijer, *Race and Aesthetics in the Anthropology of Petrus Camper* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999) 117.

Lavater even devised his own method of measuring facial angles. Though created “before the similar idea of M. Camper was known to me,”<sup>55</sup> Lavater’s method relies on a similar principle whereby the geometry of the facial profile serves as the empirical ground not only for physiognomic evaluations, but for aesthetic ones as well. It is precisely this connection between the quantitative analysis of the proportions of facial profiles and the judgment of beauty drawn from such an analysis that subtends Hegel’s writings on classical sculpture.

VI.

What is surprising about the section of the *Ästhetik* which concerns the Greek profile is not that it returns to the subject of the inner and the outer, which was so central to Hegel’s account of physiognomy in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Rather, what is unexpected is that Hegel returns in his discussion of the Greek profile to physiognomy as a conceptual instrument for grounding his demonstration of ideal beauty. Hegel does not merely discuss physiognomy. He actually applies physiognomic techniques in his analysis of sculptural beauty.

Hegel begins the second section of the second volume of the *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, the section that deals specifically with sculpture, with the following passage:

In contrast to the inorganic nature of spirit which is given its appropriate artistic form by architecture, the spiritual itself now enters so that the work of art acquires and displays spirituality as its content.<sup>56</sup>

In this formulation, Hegel immediately returns to the considerations of observational reason discussed above. Just as observational reason failed to locate its authentic being in inorganic nature, so too spirit fails to find its appropriate embodiment in the inorganic form of architecture.

Architectural treatment does make the inner subjective life glint in this externality but without being able to make it permeate the external through and through or to make the external into that completely adequate expression of spirit which lets nothing appear but itself.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, 494. Quoted in Meijer, *Race and Aesthetics in the Anthropology of Petrus Camper* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999) 120–21.

<sup>56</sup> Hegel, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975), II, 701. All references to the German edition are from the collected works, Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, in *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970) XIII–XV.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

Because of the material constraints placed on sculpture as an art form, namely, the inert materials used in its construction, sculpture allows Hegel to reconsider the relation of the inner to the outer and in doing so will invite a new appraisal of physiognomy which was specifically conceived, Hegel acknowledges, “to present this connection scientifically.”<sup>58</sup>

At this stage the dialectic spirit embarks on its return to itself out of inorganic matter, and while spirit has not yet returned to inner self-conscious life, here it expresses itself “in *bodily* form and in that form possesses an existence homogeneous with itself.”<sup>59</sup> The material shape most appropriate to spirit is, of course, the human body and it is this form that classical sculpture adopts. Just as observational reason had turned its attention to the body, so too sculpture turns toward the human figure and, by emancipating itself from the architectural intent of reshaping the inorganic world into an environment which has its purpose outside itself, instead, “gives to spirit itself [. . .] a corporeal shape” and “brings both—body and spirit—before our vision as one and the same individual whole.”<sup>60</sup> Instead of merely *indicating* spirit in its external expression, sculpture takes hold of the human form as the *actual* existence of spirit. Yet because sculpture cannot present spirit in activity, its ability to fully present spirit in all its individuality is severely limited, *but it is precisely this limitation* which leads to Hegel’s reconsideration of physiognomy and its aesthetic significance.

The chapter entitled, “The Principle of Sculpture Proper,” once again begins by referring to how the outer might serve as an adequate expression of the inner. Hegel writes,

Sculpture in general comprises the miracle of spirit’s giving itself an image of itself in something purely material. Spirit so forms this external thing that it is present to itself in it and recognizes in it the appropriate shape of its own inner life [*und diese Äußerlichkeit so formiert, daßer in ihr sich selber gegenwärtig wird und die gemäße Gestalt seines eigenen Inneren darin erkennt*].<sup>61</sup>

Among the things that must be considered in connection with this material presentation of spirit is how specific material forms must be shaped in order to embody spirit in a beautiful and corporeal figure. “What we have to see in general,” Hegel writes, “is the unity of the *ordo rerum extensarum* and the *ordo rerum idealium*, the first beautiful unification of soul and body, in so far as the spiritual inner life expresses itself in sculpture only in its existence as body [*insofern sich das geistige Innere in der Skulptur nur in seinem körperlichen*

<sup>58</sup> Ibid: 715.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid: 701.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid: 702.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid: 710.

*Dasein ausdrückt*].<sup>62</sup> Since spirit *qua* spirit is always subjective, that is, an inner self-knowledge, its expression in sculptural form must entail a specific transformation of that subjectivity. According to Hegel, the pure subjective sphere of life is excluded *eo ipso* from sculpture which concerns only the objective side of spirit. The aspects of spirit presented in sculpture cannot, therefore, be composed of highly individual details and idiosyncratic characteristics. Rather, the content of sculpture is what Hegel refers to as the “Divine,” namely, the nonparticular being of spirit unencumbered by purely subjective personalities and the contingent discord of actions and situations that shape them. Sculpture “must lay hold simply on what is unalterable and permanent,” that is, one’s determinate character. In its figures, which are not merely allegorical but are representations of distinct individuals or gods, sculpture portrays a set of permanent characteristics *as if* they comprise the entire being of individuality. “The sculptural ideal,” Hegel writes, “rests on individuality [. . .] with the result that sculpture takes for its content not the ideal of the human figure *in general* but the *determinate* ideal.”<sup>63</sup> And it is the determinate permanence of each characteristic expressed in sculpture that permits Hegel to investigate them in terms of physiognomy.

Given the content of sculpture, the question immediately arises as to the bodily forms in which this content is to be expressed and this leads him to discuss the difference between the animal body and the human body. He explains that the human body, unlike the animal body, houses not only the soul, but also the spirit. Whereas the soul is simply the awareness of the body as a body, the spirit is the self-awareness of consciousness. But it is precisely this “enormous difference”<sup>64</sup> that makes the subsequent question even more pointed, that is, the question of what constitutes the essential difference between the human body, which is the subject of sculpture, and the animal body. Hegel’s response to this concern adopts a decidedly physiognomic tenor. Even though the human is imbued with spirit, it nevertheless retains its soul and it is through the guidance of the soul, and not the spirit, that the human body shares a likeness with the animal body. “Therefore,” Hegel writes, “however superior spirit is to mere life, it makes for itself its body which appears articulated and ensouled by one and the same Concept as that of the animal body.”<sup>65</sup> This said, however, the human spirit does fashion an objectivity proper to itself but, for the most part, this appears internally in the

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid: 708.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid: 714.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. See also Petrus Camper’s 1778 lecture at the Amsterdam Academy of Design entitled, “Concerning the Points of Similarity between Quadrupeds, Birds, and Fishes,” in *The Works of the Late Professor Camper*, trans. Thomas Cogan (London: C. Dilly, 1794) 138–53. This greatly influenced Goethe’s “morphology.”

form of thought. But because the human body is not merely a natural phenomenon, it must declare itself, through its shape and structure, to be the sensuous existence of spirit. As an expression of higher inner life, it “must nevertheless be distinguished from the animal body, no matter how far in general the human body corresponds with the animal.”<sup>66</sup> But these can only appear as subtle modifications. As we shall see, these specific modifications to the human figure take a very clear-cut form in the sliding scale of facial angles presented by Camper.

It is shortly after this discussion of bodily forms that Hegel, for the first time, directly discusses physiognomy in the *Ästhetik*. He writes,

As for the more precise connection between the spirit and the body in respect of particular feelings, passions, and states of mind, it is very difficult to reduce it to fixed categories. Attempts have indeed been made in pathognomy and physiognomy to present this connection scientifically, *but so far without real success* [*Man hat zwar in der Pathognomik und Physiognomik diesen Zusammenhang wissenschaftlich darzustellen versucht, doch bis jetzt ohne den rechten Erfolg*]. Physiognomy alone can be of any importance to us because pathognomy is concerned only with the way that specific feelings and passions come alive in certain organs.<sup>67</sup>

Whereas pathognomy, the study of the mobile parts of the face and their interpretation, is not tailored to analyze the static features of sculpture, physiognomy, even though it has “so far” not achieved real success, is nonetheless a promising science.<sup>68</sup> What is important about Hegel’s remark, and what makes it stand out both from the tone of his writings in the *Phänomenologie* and from the assessment of many commentators who have written on his treatment of physiognomy, is the degree to which Hegel expresses a genuine openness to the project physiognomy has undertaken. Hegel does not reject physiognomy. Rather, like many other tacit supporters of physiognomy at the time, he sees it as a science in its infancy, which is understandably fraught with early methodological problems.

If pathognomy would be, for Hegel, an appropriate science for the study of changing human expressions, physiognomy presents itself as a useful, if undeveloped, tool for evaluating the characteristics of the immobile sculptural form; but in both cases, it is the return to the question of the relation of the inner to the outer which occasions Hegel’s engagement with these practices. Continuing his discussion, Hegel writes,

<sup>66</sup> Hegel, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, II, 715.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* My italics.

<sup>68</sup> In the fourth volume of the *Physiognomische Fragmente*, Lavater formulates the distinction in this way: “Physiognomy, in the strict sense of the word, is the art of interpreting mental powers, or the science of the signs of mental powers [*Wissenschaft der Zeichen der Kräfte*]; pathognomy, is the art of interpreting the passions, or the science of the passions [*Wissenschaft der Zeichen der Leidenschaften*]. The former is concerned with permanent features, the latter with the mobile characteristics.” Quoted in Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*, 65.

This pathognomy, as I said, does not concern us here, for sculpture has to deal only with what passes over from the spiritual inner life into the external element of shape and makes the spirit corporeal and visible there.<sup>69</sup>

And shortly thereafter, speaking of the nuanced reasons for physiognomy's relevance to the study of classical sculpture,

About physiognomy I will only mention here that if the work of sculpture, which has the human figure as its basis, is to show how the body, in its bodily form, presents not only the divine and human substance of the spirit in a merely general way but also the particular character of a specific individual in this portrayal of the Divine, we would have to embark on an exhaustive discussion of what parts, traits, and configurations of the body are completely adequate to express a specific inner mood. *We are instigated to such a study by classical sculptures* to which we must allow that in fact they do express the Divine and the characters of particular gods.<sup>70</sup>

Highlighting, once again, the degree to which he distinguished the practice of physiognomy from those of Gall's phrenology, Hegel concludes, "It is true that in this connection we may not proceed after the manner of Gall who makes the spirit into a bump on the skull."<sup>71</sup>

What Hegel is suggesting here is that if one wants to understand the sculptural representation of permanent but individual (i.e., not allegorical) characteristics in the human body, then physiognomy is a means of beginning to establish aesthetic laws for this correspondence. Whereas physiognomy failed with regard to human character because it attempted to solidify the character of a person by taking his or her traits as immutable signs, it succeeds with respect to sculpture because this art is devoted to the expression of spirit in its objective, nonactive form. Physiognomy must be seen in relation to this *aesthetic* pursuit to find laws for spiritual expression. What physiognomy promised, even in its "early stages," was the possibility of developing laws of emotional expression for the plastic arts comparable to the way certain chords in musical composition have been said to express universal emotional sympathies. The hope was to find a systematic correlation between the image of the face and the inner sentiment it expressed, not arbitrarily, but necessarily. Part of Hegel's critique of physiognomy in the *Phänomenologie* was that in seeking inner sentiment, physiognomy neglected the relevance of the active, external presentation. In the case of sculpture, of course, there is no actual internal sentiment to be expressed. So, like a somber musical chord which does not express any hidden somber emotion tucked away in the soul of the instrument, but nonetheless embodies that emotion, so too the surface features of sculpture do not express

<sup>69</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, II, 716.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* My italics.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

an actual internal character, but do embody the specific features of various emotional states. In part, the aim of physiognomy was to identify and catalog these external characteristics; but as Hegel notes in the *Phänomenologie*, physiognomy went too far by concerning itself too much with the real *subjective* characteristics of individuals rather than with the *objective* characteristics themselves.

## VII.

In the chapter entitled “The Ideal of Sculpture,” Hegel sets out to define the qualities of ideal beauty in its sculptural form. After affirming the importance of Johann Winckelmann’s work in the area of classical art, Hegel states that part of what he intends to accomplish with this chapter is to follow Winckelmann who “put an end to the vague chatter about the ideal of Greek beauty by characterizing individually and with precision the forms of the parts [of Greek statuary].”<sup>72</sup> Thus, taking Winckelmann as his starting point,<sup>73</sup> Hegel turns to sculpture and specifically to the Greek profile because, “although the expression of spirit must be diffused over the appearance of the entire body, it is most concentrated in the face.”<sup>74</sup>

The section on “The Greek Profile” opens with a technical description pulled directly from Camper’s writings on the facial angle:

This profile [i.e., the Greek profile] depends on a specific connection between forehead and nose: in other words on the almost straight or only gently curved line on which the forehead is continued to the nose without interruption; and, in more detail, on the vertical alignment of this line to a second one which if drawn from the root of the nose to the auditory canal makes a right angle with the forehead–nose line. In ideal and beautiful sculpture forehead and nose are related together by such a line and the question arises whether this is a physical necessity or merely a national or artistic accident [*und es fragt sich daher, ob dies eine bloßnationale und künstlerische Zufälligkeit oder physiologische Notwendigkeit ist*].<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Ibid: 723. Petrus Camper also praises Winckelmann’s observational skill, “It was not before I had formed the plan of this Treatise, in the year 1768, that I enjoyed the opportunity of consulting the excellent observations of Winckelmann.” However, while Camper claims to have “studied his works with the utmost advantage,” what this “penetrating observer” fails to notice is that the ideal beauty he speaks of is in fact rooted in the rules of optics. See Camper, *The Works of the Late Professor Camper, on The Connexion between the Science of Anatomy and The Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary, &c. &c.*, trans. Thomas Cogan (London: C. Dilly, 1794) 4.

<sup>73</sup> Hegel writes in the opening lines of the section entitled, “Particular Aspects of the Ideal Form in Sculpture,” in which he employs Camper’s theories: “If we turn now to consider in more detail the chief features of importance in connection with the ideal sculptural form, we will follow Winckelmann in the main.” Hegel, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, II, 727.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid: 728.

The final sentence captures succinctly the issue at stake in Hegel's analysis. The beauty that arises from the specific angular form of Greek statuary is open to two possible causal explanations. Either facial beauty is a necessary consequence of a particular angular arrangement, in which case aesthetics can rise to the level of a philosophical subject, that is, to the level of a science, or facial beauty is a contingent effect of national preference or artistic whims, in which case beauty cannot be explained according to principles and is therefore not a proper subject for science. To show that the first formulation is the correct one, Hegel introduces by name the "well-known Dutch physiologist,"<sup>76</sup> Petrus Camper.

In the third part of Camper's best known book, *The Natural Difference of Features in Persons of Different Countries and Ages*, Camper laments that, while "Roman, and more modern writers, advise us to take the antients [sic] for our models," none "have explained in what beauty, in itself or abstractedly, consists."<sup>77</sup> Camper sets himself the task of determining the empirical criteria that constitute facial beauty and, in formulating the problem, speaks in a manner very similar to Hegel: "To whatever is beautiful in itself, and does not depend upon external circumstances, or mere opinion [. . .] some relation and proportion between different parts of the subject seems absolutely required."<sup>78</sup> In both cases, beauty is understood to be a function of facial structure and proportionality, not of cultural predispositions or social biases.

Petrus Camper, a Dutch surgeon, a skilled anatomical illustrator, university professor, and avid numismatist, was responsible for the "discovery" of the *linea facialis*, the "facial line" or "facial angle," which, as Hegel accurately describes, measured the slope of the forehead. Camper, who had studied anatomy with Bernard Siegfried Albinus<sup>79</sup> in Leyden, presented his most influential ideas not in a book on physiology, but in an illustrated reference book intended for art students.<sup>80</sup> The book was written in 1768 and bore the complete title: *The Natural Difference of Features in Persons of Different Countries and Ages; and on Beauty as It Is in Ancient Sculptures; with a New Method of Drawing Heads, National*

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Camper, *The Works of the Late Professor Camper, on The Connexion between the Science of Anatomy and The Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary, &c. &c.*, trans. Thomas Cogan (London: C. Dilly, 1794) 78.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid: 82.

<sup>79</sup> For a study of Bernard Albinus see Hendrik Punt, *Bernard Siegfried Albinus (1697–1770) On Human Nature: Anatomical and Physiological Ideas in Eighteenth-Century Leiden* (Amsterdam: B. M. Israël B. V., 1983).

<sup>80</sup> Bernard Siegfried Albinus, *Tabulae sceleti musculorum corporis humani* (Leyden: J. & H. Verbeek, 1768); and Albinus, *Academicarum annotationum liber octavus* (Leyden: Verbeek, 1747).

*Features, and Portraits, with Accuracy.*<sup>81</sup> From the outset, Camper's physiology was in the service of aesthetics, and thus its contents are comprised of the merger of two different interests. On the one hand, Camper was interested in the stable characteristics which set one face apart from another, and which permit one to demonstrate that "national differences can be reduced to rules."<sup>82</sup> But on the other hand, these mere differences acquire aesthetic value, and *these* differences rise to the level not of descriptions and techniques, but to aesthetic interpretation and to philosophy. So while Camper sets out to devise an anatomically correct way of sketching faces, as well as a way to distinguish authentic ancient coins from their forgeries, he ends up with a book that proposes a genuine theory of aesthetics. "The head of an Apollo, a Venus, a Laocoön, is," Camper writes, underscoring the question that guides his project, "universally allowed to be finer, or more beautiful, than the heads of our best proportioned men and women. Whence does this proceed?"<sup>83</sup>

Camper's answer to this question takes him to the heart of his theory of facial angles, the very theory Hegel utilizes in his discussion of Greek beauty.<sup>84</sup> Camper's theory of facial angles, dramatically illustrated in a sequence of profiles, (Figures 4 and 5) holds that as the angle of a line drawn from the prominent part of the forehead to the front of the incisor teeth changes with respect to

<sup>81</sup> All references to Camper's *The Natural Difference of Features in Persons of Different Countries and Ages* are to the 1794 English translation by the physician Thomas Cogan (and his Dutch wife who in all likelihood had a significant hand in the translation). While Cogan does not include the actual title of Camper's work, it is the same text. See Camper, *The Works of the Late Professor Camper, on The Connexion between the Science of Anatomy and The Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary, &c. &c.*, trans. Thomas Cogan (London: C. Dilly, 1794) 78. Note that the English title stresses the compatibility between anatomical studies and the fine arts. The text was originally published in Dutch by Camper's son, A. G. Camper. See Camper, *Verhandeling van Petrus Camper, over het natuurlijk verschil der wezenstrekken in menschen van onderscheiden landaart en ouderdom; over het scoon in antyke beelden en gesneedene steenen. Gevolgd door een voorstel van eene nieuwe manier om hoofden van allerleye menschen met zekerheid te tekenen*, ed. A. G. Camper (Utrecht: B. Wild en J. Altheer, 1791).

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Cogan, "Introduction," in Camper, *The Works of the Late Professor Camper, on The Connexion between the Science of Anatomy and The Arts of Drawing, Painting, Statuary, &c. &c.*, trans. Thomas Cogan (London: C. Dilly, 1794) x.

<sup>83</sup> Camper, *The Works of the Late Professor Camper*, 81–82.

<sup>84</sup> Not unlike Hegel, Johann Herder both avidly adopts and attempts to improve upon Camper's theory in the early chapters of his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. See Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, in *Herder's Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1892) XIII. First translated into English in 1800 as *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, trans. T. Churchill (New York: Bergman, 1800). See especially Book IV, Ch. 1 "Man Is Organized to a Capacity of Reasoning," and Book IV, Ch. 2 "Retrospect from the Organization of the Human Head to Inferior Creatures, the Heads of Which Approach It in Form."

THE GREEK PROFILE

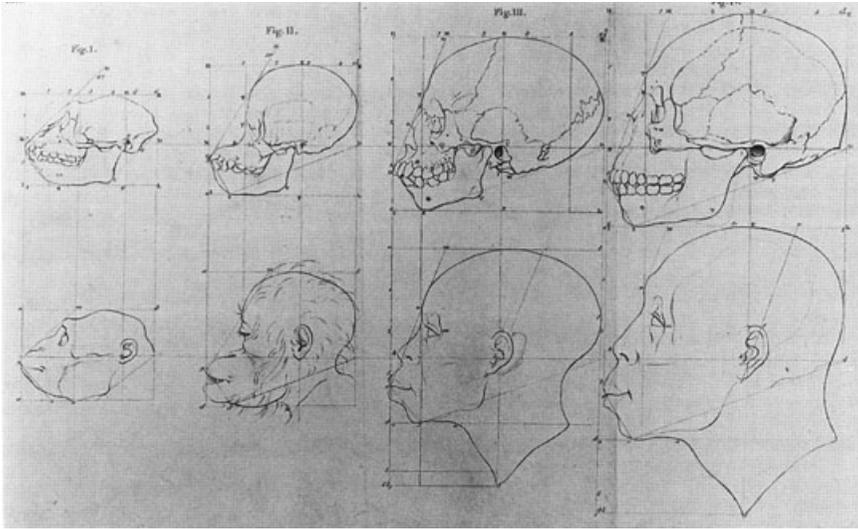


Figure 4

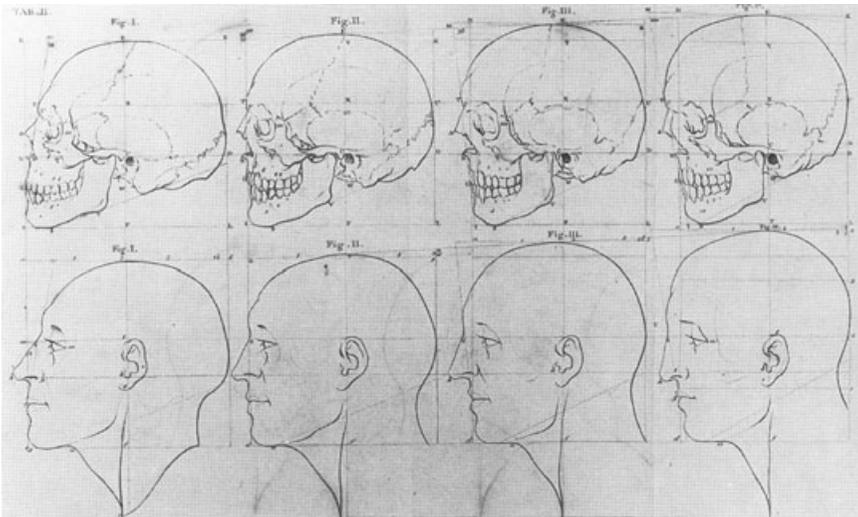


Figure 5

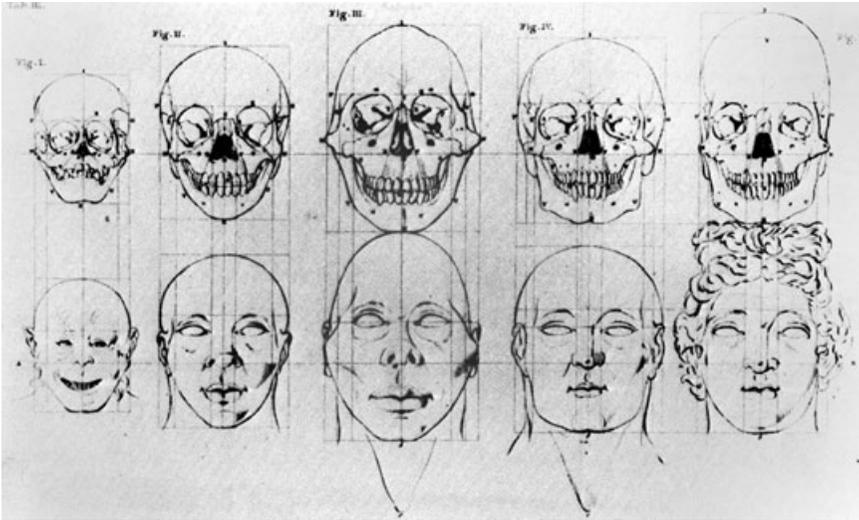


Figure 6

a second horizontal line traced from the bottom of the nose to the external auditory canal, the entire physiological structure of the face changes as well. This single mutation, Camper argues, precipitates all of the major differences that exist not only between humans and animals, but also between various “national” groups, as well as between these groups and the ideal proportions of Greek sculpture. Camper’s measurements, which were all taken from skulls, purportedly furnished a single, quantifiable means of determining not only difference, but also beauty. For as the angle of the line increased, so too did the beauty of the face. In the illustrations Camper provides, he lays out a visual evolution of this widening angle which begins with the head of a tailed monkey and ends with a Greek statuary, or more precisely, the *Apollo Belvedere* (or *Pythian Apollo*) (Figure 6). From an angle of 42 degrees in the tailed monkey to 100 in the Greek sculpture, the higher the angle the more beautiful the figure.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> As Barbara Stafford, among others, points out, “It must be underlined again, however, that Camper did not attach a taxonomic significance to quantifiable differences in facial angles. Like Buffon and Maupertuis, he was a monogeneticist believing in the fundamental unity of mankind.” Thus, the racism which certainly attached itself to Camper’s theories is not to be found, at least not with prevalence, in Camper’s own work. See Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993) 114. See also Meijer who makes the same argument. Meijer, *Race and Aesthetics in the Anthropology of Petrus Camper* (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1999). Meijer’s book is, to my knowledge, the most extensive study of Camper in English.

The racist implications of this conflation of physiological difference with aesthetic value are profound,<sup>86</sup> but for the purposes of this article, what is striking is the fact that the morphology Camper illustrates moves from properly organic beings to the inorganic, from the biological to the sculptural. In this movement, Lavater, and even Hegel, have a stake. The last volume of the *Fragmente*, for instance, includes an illustration depicting in 16 frames, the gradual change in the species from a frog into a man—precisely the trajectory of Hegel’s analysis of Greek sculpture (Figure 7). This same movement is also echoed by an engraving done by Grandville after Camper, in which the facial angle is gradually widened, from the *Apollo Belvedere* to a frog, that is to say, from the Greek profile to an animal (Figure 8).<sup>87</sup>

Speaking of the facial angle, Hegel writes, “[Camper] has characterized this line more precisely as the line of beauty in the face since he finds it the chief difference between the formation of the human and the animal profile.”<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the slope of this line is not only directly proportional to the beauty of a face, but corresponds inversely with the practical function of facial features. The predominance of the mouth, jaw and teeth in the face of the animal “gives the animal head the appearance of being merely adapted to natural functions and without any

<sup>86</sup> My future research will address this connection between aesthetics and racism. See, for instance, George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1985) 17–34; also, *Racism in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Harold E. Pagliaro, 3 vols. (Cleveland: Western Reserve, 1973); and Sander L. Gilman, “The Figure of the Black in German Aesthetic Theory,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 8 (1975): 373–91. Meijer, in *Race and Aesthetics in the Anthropology of Petrus Camper*, argues that, while Camper’s theories were widely used to support racist arguments, Camper himself was not racist in his intentions. Stephen Jay Gould corroborates this reading in his essay, “Petrus Camper’s Angle: The Grandfather of Scientific Racism has Gotten a Bum Rap,” *Natural History* 96 (1987): 12–18.

<sup>87</sup> This continuum brings home a point which is often overlooked, namely, that eighteenth-century attempts to establish aesthetics as a rigorous philosophical subject, free of personal opinions and historical contingencies, required that it model itself on already existing sciences and, above all, it is the biological sciences that aestheticians, from Kant to Hegel, turn to. In Camper and Lavater one sees the obverse: the biological sciences, or at least physiology and the pseudo-science of physiognomy, turn to aesthetics for their guiding thread, that is, the *telos* of beauty in nature. One reason for the pairing of biology with aesthetics may well be, because of all the sciences, biology, as Georges Canguilhem has argued, engenders a pathology, that is, it is open to the question of value. Additionally, the biological sciences, once convinced of the evolution of natural species, depends on its own conception of history which also adopts its own notion of progress. The same is true for the history of art formulated by writers such as Winckelmann wherein beauty cannot be understood abstractly, but must be understood in relation to *its own* history. That is, art has an internal evolutionary development just as evolutionary biology does. Therefore, the conflation of these two disciplines may not be as surprising as it first seems, as long as one understands that, in both cases, it is a teleological, historical understanding that is being accommodated. See George Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological* (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

<sup>88</sup> Hegel, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, II, 728.

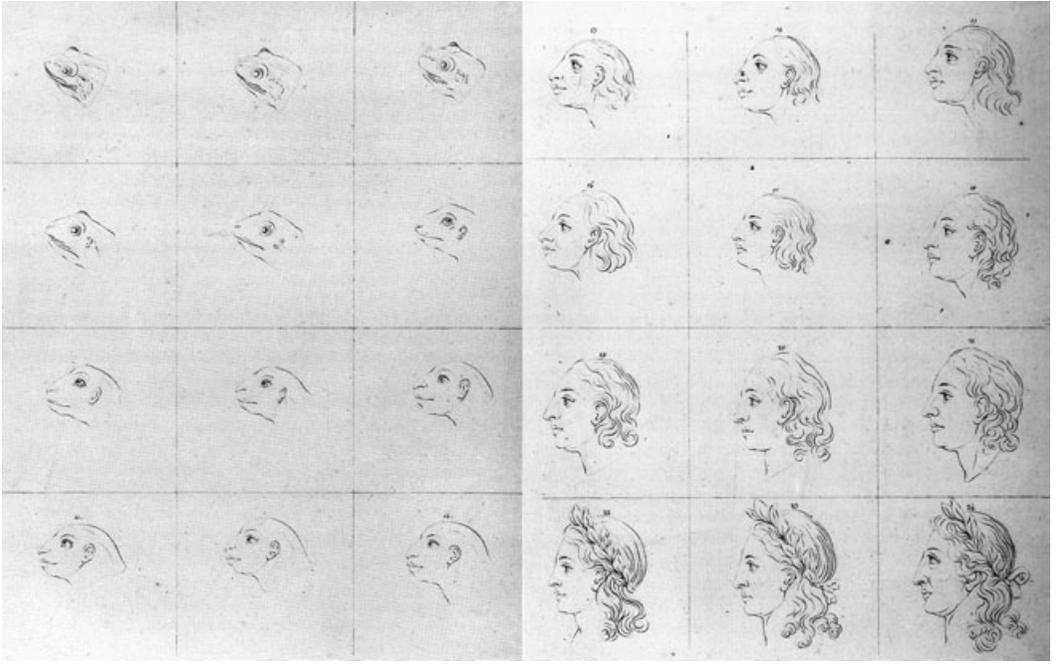


Figure 7

spiritual ideal significance,” so much so that, as Hegel concludes, “we can understand the whole animal organism in the light of these tools in the mouth.”<sup>89</sup> As the animal body expresses in its functional appearance a merely material need for nourishment, it does not, and cannot, express the presence of spirit either. Hegel explains that, “if the human appearance in its bodily form is to bear an impress of the spirit, then those organs which appear as the most important in the animal must be in the background,”<sup>90</sup> and thereby give way to those features indicative of a theoretical, and not merely a practical, relation. It is for precisely this reason, then, that the human face is drawn upward, dominated not by the mouth and jaw, but by “the upper part of the face, in the intellectual brow and, lying under it, the eye, expressive of the soul.”<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid: 729.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

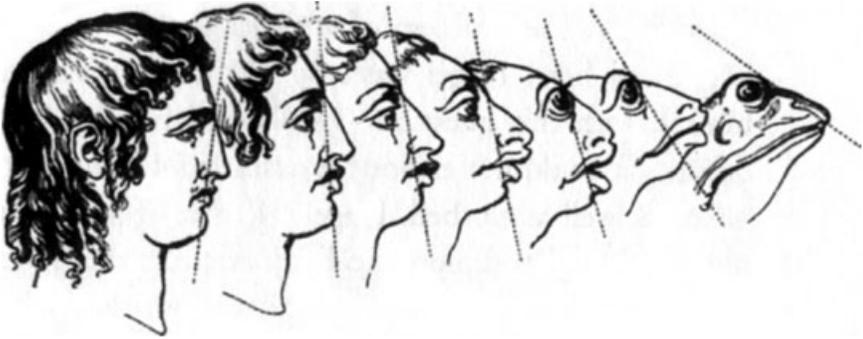


Figure 8

By beginning his analysis of classical Greek sculpture not only with a discussion of the development of organic forms, but also with a discussion of the evolution of biological function, Hegel is echoing certain passages in Johann Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* which, like the passages in the *Ästhetik*, are equally inspired by Camper. What is particularly interesting in the writings of all three of these theorists is the degree to which natural history merges with art history, that is, the extent to which the evolution of biological forms in organic species is treated as commensurate with the development of artistic style. In Camper, as I noted above, the aesthetic application of the facial angle begins with animal forms, passes through human figures and culminates with the *Apollo Belvedere*. In Hegel, the very same genealogy is proposed in which a functional assessment of animal profiles—"the specific projection of the animal's snout which presses forward as if to get as near as possible to the consumption of food"<sup>92</sup>—fuses with a discussion of human beauty as exemplified in the Greek profile. The question which arises is what exactly warrants the affinity between the biological and the aesthetic. One possible answer, an answer which German aesthetics as well as the German anthropological tradition seem to bear out, is that both natural history and art history are firmly premised on a particular conception of evolutionary history which has at its guiding thread search for stable, underlying "types." The incremental changes tracked by natural historians find a similarly slow but progressive transformation in the analysis of artistic styles, each of which pulls from the ephemera of history a set of stable forms which, while undergoing change because of specific

<sup>92</sup> Ibid: 728.

contextual conditions, remain identifiable throughout. Given the *historical* analysis of beauty put forth by Winckelmann, which Herder, Hegel and even Camper held in high esteem, and given that for Winckelmann beauty is inseparable from the climactic and social conditions in which it is produced and which lend to specific periods of art their distinctive styles, it is not difficult to conceive how the formation of biological organisms, including the inhabitants of different nations, which were also understood to be the products of their specific climactic conditions, could be situated in relation to artistic development, particularly when national differences were said to be exhibited as prominently in physiological traits as in cultural artifacts.

In the *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, the prototypical text concerning the impact of climactic and historical conditions on both cultural and natural development, Herder embarks on an explicit evaluation of Camper's work. In the first chapter of book four, entitled "Man is Organized to a Capacity of Reasoning," Herder sets out to improve on Camper's facial angle by stipulating that it is not the evolution of the angle of the face, but of the entire body which is most illustrative of the differences between animals and humans. In an almost cinematic manner, Herder describes the metamorphosis of the horizontal posture of animals into fully erect humans by following the subtle alteration of anatomical forms:

Let this point [the steep angle of the ape's skull due to its inability to walk erect] be otherwise disposed, beautiful and noble will be the whole form. The forehead will advance forward big with thought, and the skull swell into an arch with calm exalted dignity. [. . .] From the formation of the head to the erect posture: from its being internally and externally organized to a perpendicular centre of gravitation.<sup>93</sup>

The mutation of animal species into walking human beings corresponds not only to new functional needs, but to aesthetic progress as well. Everything, it seems,

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<sup>93</sup> Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, 74. Herder explicitly addresses his statements to Camper, as in the following passage: "As the justice of this remark is striking, it gives me much pleasure to trace it, as I believe I have done, to its physical principle; which is *the tendency of the creature to the horizontal or perpendicular position and form of the head*, on which the happy situation of the brain, and the beauty and proportion of all the features, ultimately depend. If therefore we would render the theory of Camper complete, and at the same time display its fundamental principle, we need only to take the last cervical vertebra as the central point, instead of the ear, and from it draw lines to the hindmost point of the occiput, the highest of the crown of the head, the most projecting of the forehead, and the most prominent of the upper jaw: thus we shall not only render evident the variety of figure in the head, but also its principle, that *every circumstance in the form and direction of this part depends on the erect or prone gait of the creature*, and consequently on its general habit, so that, according to a simple principle of formation unity may be produced amid the greatest variety" (84).

becomes progressively more beautiful. And a few pages later, in an explicit reference to Greek sculpture, Herder makes this assessment perfectly clear:

Why does the crown of the grecian head incline so pleasingly forward [*Warum neiget sich die griechische Form des Oberhaupts so angenehm vor*]? Because it contains the amplest space for an unconfined brain, and indicates fine sound concavities in the frontal bone, so that it may be considered as the temple of *clear and youthfully beautiful thought*.<sup>94</sup>

As before, the biological is indexed with the artistic and again Camper's basic model is coupled with a general acceptance of Lavater's physiognomic project for, following the passage just quoted, Herder writes,

I am persuaded, that on the agreement of these parts will be erected a valuable science, to which physiognomy proceeding on conjecture would not easily attain [*als uns die bloß erratende Physiognomik schwerlich allein gewähren kann*]. The grounds of the external form lie within; for every thing has been fashioned by the organic powers operating from within to without [*Im Innern liegt der Grund des Äußern, weil durch organische Kräfte alles von innen heraus gebildet ward*], and Nature has made every being such a complete whole, as if she had never created any thing else.<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, in a chapter entitled "Retrospect from Organization of the Human Head to Inferior Creatures, the Heads of Which Approach It in Form," Herder outlines several propositions concerning his theory of posture which emphasize the role of function in molding aesthetic form.<sup>96</sup> The second proposition reads,

<sup>94</sup> Ibid: 80.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid: 80–81. Herder was influenced by the theories set forth by both Camper and Lavater in much the same way Hegel was. It is interesting to note that there is some, though not entirely convincing, evidence to suggest that Herder's writings had a significant influence on Gall and his phrenological method. Erna Lesky argues that "[. . .] in Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, which appeared in 1784–91, just in the critical years for Gall's intellectual development, Gall found everything that Bonnet had failed to give him. Instead of barren, physical-mechanical automatism he found a dynamic-vitalistic conception of nature in which, [. . .] only one single law ruled all creatures as well as the formation and structure of their organs" (303–04). She also notes that when he was accused of materialism in Vienna in 1801, Gall called upon Herder in the defense he presented before the magistrates of Lower Austria. See Erna Lesky, "Structure and Function in Gall," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 44 (1970): 297–314.

<sup>96</sup> In an essay aptly entitled "The Extent to Which the Idea 'Beauty is Perfection in Combination with Freedom' May be Applied to Living Organisms," Goethe also emphasizes the inverse proportionality between function and beauty. Goethe argues that "If the members [i.e., the body parts] of an animal are so formed that the creature can give expression to its being in a limited way, we will find the animal ugly;" for the more limited an animal is in its functionality the more that functionality will dominate the overall impression of the creature and render it ugly in appearance. He continues, "When I look at this animal my attention will be drawn to the parts which predominate—the creature cannot make a harmonious impression because it has no harmony. Thus the mole is perfect but ugly because its form permits only a few, limited actions, the preponderance

“the more the body endeavors to raise itself, and the head to mount upwards freely from the skeleton, the more perfect is the creature’s form.”<sup>97</sup>

In both Herder and Hegel, the moves from the prone to the erect, from the sloping angle to the perpendicular, mark a change in function as much as they do a change in aesthetic value. Even Herder, who espouses neither a progressive theory of absolute beauty nor a progressive notion of history, is sympathetic to this evolutionary model and does suggest, early in the *Ideen*, that beautiful form (the erect posture) is linked to superior function (rational thought). In espousing this position, lifted from Camper, Herder is fully Hegel’s precursor.

### VIII.

For Hegel, Greek sculpture accentuates the facial line so as to bring out a beauty which nature itself has not produced. “By softening and smoothing the lines,” Hegel writes, “the Greek profile introduces a beautiful harmony into the gentle and unbroken connection between the forehead and the nose” so that the nose seems to be drawn upward “towards the spiritual parts.”<sup>98</sup> This artistic modification constitutes, as it does in Camper, a perfection of natural types. Like Camper, Hegel plots a continuum which begins with animal physiognomy, passes through national and racial human types, and ends with the aesthetics of Greek statuary. The taxonomical barriers being traversed are numerous. And it is by following this facial line as it migrates from animals to artwork that ultimately leads Hegel to conclude, in answer to the question that began his discussion of Greek sculpture, that while it is said that “the Chinese, Jews, and Egyptians regarded other, indeed opposite, formations as just as beautiful or more so [than Greek sculpture],” and that, “there is no proof that the Greek profile is the model of genuine beauty [*der Typus der echten Schönheit*],” this is, as it turns out, “only superficial chatter.”<sup>99</sup>

Having established the validity of treating beauty as an independent, noncontingent, and measurable quality, Hegel proceeds to give numerous examples of how the ideal beauty of various parts of the face are achieved. It is in the course of these demonstrations that Hegel moves from the ideas of Camper, which are not strictly physiognomic, directly into those of Lavater. Hegel organizes his

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of certain parts renders him misshapen.” See Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe: The Collected Works*, XII, 22. The German edition of the collected works also contains Goethe’s brief thoughts on Camper’s lectures. See Goethe, “Rezension von Vorlesungen Petrus Campers,” in *Johann Wolfgang Goethe Sämtliche Werke: Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche*, ed. Dorothea Kuhn (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1987) XXIV, 223–24.

<sup>97</sup> Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, 83.

<sup>98</sup> Hegel, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, II, 730.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

series of examples according to the parts of the face and their relative kinship to spirit and its authentic expression. Pursuant to this, he begins with the eyes, moves to the nose, then to the mouth, the chin, and finally to the hair. In each case, though more evidently in some than others, Hegel speaks in the language of physiognomy. For instance, in his review of noses, after asserting that the form of the nose cedes to the face the most varied appearances and the most manifold differences of expression, he illustrates this by stating that, a “sharp nose with thin wings [. . .] we are accustomed to associate with a sharp intellect, while a broad and pendant one or one snubbed like an animal’s is indicative to us of [*aufgestülpte auf*] sensuality, stupidity, and bestiality.”<sup>100</sup> Or alternately in his treatment of the chin, a “full chin gives the impression [*bringt den Eindruck*] of a certain satiety and repose; whereas old and restless women shuffle along with weak chins.”<sup>101</sup> While in both these cases, Hegel does admittedly refrain from establishing a direct correlation between facial features and *actual* character traits, and instead says only that noses and chins are “indicative of” and “give the impression of” certain traits; this may, in fact, be the case only because Hegel is referring to sculptures and not actual people. Nevertheless, the language and terminology Hegel uses is explicitly that of physiognomy.<sup>102</sup>

But within the several pages in which Hegel employs the language of physiognomy to describe specific examples of sculptural profiles, there is one instance, and one instance only, when a proper name arises in regard to which Hegel delivers a straightforward physiognomic reading. The name mentioned is that of Schiller. In discussing the mouth and the lips, Hegel begins as he did previously,

<sup>100</sup> Ibid: 735.

<sup>101</sup> Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, II, 736–37.

<sup>102</sup> It might be mentioned here that Winckelmann’s analyses of sculpture also tends toward the physiognomic (though his interpretations are never accompanied by quantitative techniques, such as Camper’s facial angles). H. B. Nisbet, in an essay concerning the reception of the *Laocoön Group* in Germany, argues that Lavater was influenced by Winckelmann’s physiognomic readings of classical sculpture, specifically the facial attributes of the *Laocoön*. Nisbet quotes the following passage from the fourth volume of the *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* to make his point, “das väterliche Herz offenbart sich in den wehmütigen Augen, und das Mitleiden scheint in einem trüben Dufte auf denselben zu schwimmen. Sein Gesicht ist klagend, aber nicht schreiend, seine Augen sind nach der höheren Hilfe gewandt. Der Mund ist voll von Wehmut, und die gesenkte Unterlippe schwer von derselben; in der überwärts gezogenen Oberlippe aber ist dieselbe mit Schmerz vermischt, welcher mit einer Regung von Unmut, wie über ein unverdientes unwürdiges Leiden, in die Nase hinauftritt, dieselbe schwülstig macht, und sich in den erweiterten und aufwärts gezogenen Nüstern offenbart. Unter der Strin ist der Streit zwischen Schmerz und Widerstand, wie in einem Punkte vereinigt, mit großer Weisheit gebildet [. . .]” See Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (Wien: Phaidon Verlag, 1934) 324–25. Nisbet subsequently observes that, “[t]his passage, in fact, is an exercise in physiognomy rather than objective description.” See Nisbet “Laocoon in Germany: The Reception of the Group since Winckelmann.” *Oxford German Studies* 10 (1979): 27.

stating simply that “lips that are all too thin are indicative of parsimony of feeling [*denn allzu dünne Lippen deuten auch Kargheit des Empfindens*].” But Hegel continues on to illustrate this point by referencing the lips of Schiller himself. “Sculpture,” Hegel writes, “makes the lower lip fuller than the upper one, as was the case with Schiller [*was auch bei Schiller der Fall war*]; in the formation of his mouth it was possible to read the significance and richness of his mind and heart [*in dessen Bildung des Mundes jene Bedeutsamkeit und Fülle des Gemüts zu lesen war*].”<sup>103</sup> The methodological clarity of this passage is striking. This is a physiognomic analysis. It is, moreover, an analysis which is closely echoed in Lavater’s own study of lips. In fact, there is a good chance that Hegel’s reference to Schiller’s well-proportioned lips, as opposed to some other person’s, was not guided simply by his own estimation, but was known at the time through Lavater’s highly favorable estimation of Schiller’s facial traits. On May 31, 1793, Lavater paid a visit to Schiller and took notes on his favorable physiognomic facial characteristics.<sup>104</sup> Either way Hegel’s description of Schiller is an overtly physiognomic one and consequently, since Hegel does not shy away from using such techniques, we are called upon to reassess the statements Hegel made many years earlier in the *Phänomenologie* and, I think, conclude that Hegel’s criticisms of Lavater, while valid with respect to the discussion of observational reason, do not indicate that Hegel entirely dismissed either the practice of physiognomy or the project it had undertaken. To say simply that Hegel rejects physiognomy is to go too far in attributing to the early nineteenth century our own criteria for evaluating what is, or should be, considered a possible science. Hegel’s discussion of the Greek profile ought to be understood, for better or worse, through a physiognomic lens. Its extended argument is saturated with both the terminology and methodology of Camper and Lavater and ought to be read as part of this tradition—that is, as a genuinely physiognomic text in its own right. And given the tremendous impact Lavater’s *Fragmente* had on European thought from the last quarter of the eighteenth century until the middle of the nineteenth, it is a cultural force which ought to be kept in mind, far more than it currently is, by both aestheticians and art historians whose work steers them to this period.

As I stated at the outset, Hegel’s use of physiognomic and anatomical analyses in his treatment of sculptural beauty is a far cry from the methods employed

<sup>103</sup> Hegel, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, II, 736.

<sup>104</sup> Tytler, *Physiognomy in the European Novel*, 343. Friedrich von Schiller wrote a guarded assessment of physiognomy as well. See Schiller, *Versuch über den Zusammenhang der tierischen Natur mit seiner geistigen*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Otto Güntter and Georg Witkowski (Leipzig, 1901–11) XVI. See especially the chapter entitled “Physiognomik der Empfindungen.” For a discussion of Lavater’s physiognomical assessment of Schiller, see Heinrich Funck, “Schilleriana aus Lavaters Korrespondenz und Tagbüchern,” *Euphorion: Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte* 12 (1905): 421–35.

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by Winckelmann, and for that matter Kant as well. The move to quantify beauty, to explain beauty in terms of measurable criteria, coaxes the theory of art into the realm of the sciences to a degree that is not present in earlier philosophers of art. As the techniques of people like Camper and Lavater were taken up into discussions of beauty, the exemplary character attributed to works of art began to diminish and, while Hegel is only one example of this trend toward quantitative analysis which was occurring simultaneously across the human sciences, his work adequately discloses a shift in aesthetic interest—a shift away from an interest in the exemplary character of classical works of art.

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