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Hegel's End of Art and the Artwork as an Internally Purposive Whole

GERAD GENTRY*

ABSTRACT Hegel's end-of-art thesis is arguably the most notorious assertion in aesthetics. I outline traditional interpretive strategies before offering an original alternative to these. I develop a conception of art that facilitates a reading of Hegel on which he is able to embrace three seemingly contradictory theses about art, namely, (i) the end-of-art thesis, (ii) the continued significance of art for its own sake (autonomy thesis), and (iii) the necessity of art for robust knowledge (epistemic-necessity thesis). I argue that Hegel is able to embrace all three theses at once through a conception of the work of art as an internally purposive whole (what I call the "IP View" of art). On the IP View, because of the kind of wholes that artworks are, they (i.a) are valuable for their own sake as ends-in-themselves, (i.b) yield valuable experiences because they are valuable for their own sake, and thereby (i.c) are necessary for robust knowledge. Finally, I suggest that not only does Hegel appear to hold the IP View of art, but also that on such a view, there is a very sensible reason for affirming (one reading of) Hegel's end-of-art thesis as an important means to establishing art's actual significance for robust knowledge against soaring, but unsubstantiable, claims about art's potency with respect to robust knowledge.

KEYWORDS aesthetics, philosophy of art, teleology, autonomy of art, epistemic necessity, knowledge

G. W. F. HEGEL'S SO-CALLED END-OF-ART THESIS is perhaps the most notorious assertion in aesthetics. This thesis consists of a twofold claim that *art is and remains for us a thing of the past* and *thought and reflection have surpassed the fine arts*. Despite Hegel sometimes being hailed as the grandfather of art history, this thesis alone warrants the widespread caution that exists (outside Hegel studies) toward his philosophy of art. There are several strategies for handling the end-of-art thesis. One strategy is to reject the relevant passages as shortsighted and misguided, but severable without injurious effect.¹ Another strategy is to abandon the systematic

¹Pippin adopts this first strategy. He offers perhaps the most well-known variation of this "failure of imagination" claim (*Beautiful*, 8). While I think this is wrong, my account is compatible with the

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Hegel (i.e. his broader philosophy of spirit) and instead handpick local insights from his philosophy of art as isolated yet fruitful contributions to aesthetics.² A third strategy is to embrace his end-of-art thesis as an accurate assessment of art's impotence,³ to wit, that art has no real constitutive value for knowledge, and that the romantic belief that it does both is and should remain a thing of the past; philosophical reflection is more adequate to the task.⁴ Finally, a fourth strategy that no one takes (to my knowledge) is that of defending his (i) end-of-art thesis within a broader claim to (ii) the continued significance of art for its own sake (call this the autonomy thesis) and (iii) the necessity of art for robust knowledge (call this the epistemic-necessity thesis).⁵ Perhaps the reason this last strategy has not been adopted is that the three objectives seem antithetical.

It seems that insofar as the significance of art lies in the advancement or refinement of knowledge, its significance is not for its own sake but for the sake of something outside itself, namely knowledge. Thus, (i) and (ii) seem antithetical. Furthermore, even if we find a way of meaningfully holding both theses at once, they appear to be antithetical to (iii) the end-of-art thesis; for the end-of-art thesis typically understands art to have been important for robust knowledge in certain epochs in history, which appears to contradict the universal necessity of (ii).⁶ Further, since philosophy or thought has "surpassed the fine arts" as more adequate to that end of robust knowledge (ÄI 21), (iii) appears antithetical to (i) insofar as the characteristic significance of art has lost its "truth" for us (ÄI 22), since this is to treat art as a mere *means* to knowledge, not as an end in itself. In short, there is good reason that the fourth strategy is not taken. In this article, however, I develop this fourth strategy, arguing that all three theses are right.

I begin with an overview of three rival versions of Hegel's end-of-art thesis that simultaneously introduces some basic claims at work in his conception of art. I then

broader interpretation Pippin offers in his primary work on the subject, which I discuss as the Third Position in sections 1 and 3.2. Henrich also takes Hegel to embrace a lamentably shortsighted view of the future of art ("Art Today," 107–33).

²This second strategy is common among most art theorists and philosophers of art. Hegel's end-of-art thesis has no support within aesthetics, so far as I am aware.

³This third strategy is not common even among those who take the end-of-art reading to be an accurate interpretation of Hegel's view. The veracity of that claim is rarely defended in its own right.

⁴According to Pinkard, Hegel views art as a "collective practice of self-education . . . a way of collectively reflecting on what it means to be human" ("Romantic Art," 8).

⁵I use the term 'robust knowledge' merely to note possible degrees of adequacy within knowledge, such that while judgment X may yield knowledge Y, this says nothing about whether knowledge Y is adequate to the entirety of its content claims. For example, two-dimensional perception may be capable of yielding knowledge of object Z without this excluding the possibility of a more adequate three-dimensional or even four-dimensional perception. So, too, I use 'robust knowledge' broadly to make space for necessary methods of knowing without thereby entailing that knowledge apart from such further methods is not knowledge. So, while art is not necessary or even particularly helpful for determining factual correctness or logical necessity, this says nothing about whether it is helpful or necessary for deeper truths or more holistic knowledge of which logical necessity and factual correctness may likewise be mere parts (Gentry, "Purposiveness," 62; "Ground"; see also note 7).

⁶By 'necessary for,' I do not mean that which is phenomenologically, historically, or relatively necessary, but rather that which is absolutely necessary or internally necessitated by robust knowledge. So, if art is not always necessary for robust knowledge, then even if art were the best approximation of robust knowledge available in a given epoch, that relative need and worth are not sufficient to warrant the claim that it is "necessary for" robust knowledge.

outline what it means to understand an artwork as an internally purposive whole (what I call the IP View), where this means conceiving of an artwork as more akin to an organism than to an artifact. On the IP View, because of (i) the kind of wholes that artworks are, they (i.a) are valuable for their own sake as ends-in-themselves, (i.b) yield valuable experiences because they are valuable for their own sake, and thereby (i.c) are necessary for robust knowledge—where ‘robust’ means a kind of adequacy not sufficiently captured by partial forms of knowing, such as mere logical necessity or factual correctness. Hegel’s term for “robust knowledge” is the “Idea,” the “adequate concept” that makes *Realphilosophie* possible, where the Idea is both the “concept” and “its actualization” (GW 12:173).⁷ While the term ‘robust knowledge’ corresponds to Hegel’s concept of the Idea, my argument presupposes neither agreement on what constitutes robust knowledge nor even agreement that art is necessary for robust knowledge. What matters is that Hegel takes art to be necessary for a more adequate knowledge than is possible without art, and that thesis by Hegel has typically been viewed as at odds with the other two. Presupposed by the possibility of robust knowledge is that different ways of knowing some X must ultimately be unifiable or coherent to count as genuine knowledge of that X, even if knowledge turns out to be the kind of thing that resists claims to completion, and instead suggests unending striving toward greater adequacy. So, robust knowledge is used here merely to note the possibility of degrees of adequacy within knowledge. Finally, I will suggest that not only does Hegel appear to hold the IP View of art,⁸ but that on such a view there is a sensible reason for affirming (one reading of) Hegel’s end-of-art thesis as an important means to establishing art’s actual significance for robust knowledge against soaring, but unsubstantiable, claims about art’s potency with respect to robust knowledge.

I. THREE RIVAL VERSIONS OF HEGEL ON ART’S END

I.1 *First Position: The End-of-Art Thesis*

Reference to Hegel’s end-of-art thesis most often serves as a shorthand critique.⁹ This critique boils down to the view that Hegel dogmatically asserts that art *was*

⁷This correspondence between what I call “robust knowledge” and Hegel’s Idea cannot be pursued here, since it would require an account of what Hegel means by both an “adequate concept” and the degree of “animation” that differentiate stages of the Idea (life, cognition/will, and absolute). For Hegel’s discussion of the Idea and the actualization of the concept, see GW 12:173–253, 9:422–35, 20:543; and §1 14.1 For more on the truth-conditional, internal requirement for concepts to be capable of self-actualization, see Alznauer, *Responsibility*, 29–36. For the method and whole of the idea, see Förster, *Twenty-Five Years*, 351–77; Henrich, *Between*, 324–25; Ng, *Life*, 279–93; and Pippin, *Idealism*, 239–60. In his aesthetics, Hegel defines the Idea as the concept “shaped forward into reality and as having advanced to immediate unity and correspondence with this reality” (ÄI 80–81).

⁸The IP View contrasts with theories of art like the Experiential View and Affective View. Examples of an Experiential View of art include Budd, *Values of Art*, 11; Levinson, *Aesthetics*, 12; and Stang, “Artworks,” 271, 273. For a critique of Levinson and Budd, see Sharpe, “Artistic Value,” 324, 330. Affective Views include Gorodeisky, “Pleasure,” 200; cf. Epley, “Emotions” and Carroll’s critique of the Affective View, “Art Appreciation.” For my own alternative to these, see Gentry, “Artworks Are Valuable for Their Own Sake.”

⁹It is a shorthand critique from a variety of perspectives. Most, whether critics or Hegelians, reject the veracity of Hegel’s end-of-art thesis as misguided. So, the attribution of it to Hegel is not typically to his credit.

in the past valuable for self-conscious formation and life, but no longer has such essential formative value for us. Put simply, philosophy achieves better what former generations thought art could achieve. This reading of Hegel is based on such passages as Hegel's opening remarks in his long introduction to the *Lectures on the Fine Arts*, where he writes, "Der Gedanke und die Reflexion hat die schöne Kunst überflügelt" (ÄI 21): "thought and reflection have surpassed fine art" (my translation), or, as T. M. Knox translates it, "Thought and reflection have spread their wings above fine art" (*Lectures*, 10).¹⁰ The criticism is based on the idea that Hegel is here claiming that the highest value that we used to attribute to the fine arts for self-conscious life we now recognize as better served by philosophy.

Hegel seems to solidify the end-of-art thesis just a few paragraphs after the above-cited enlightened flight of philosophy. He writes, "In all these respects art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our *ideas* instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place" (ÄI 22/*Lectures*, 11). Again, so the critique goes, art *was* vital for the formation of self-conscious life, its activity, and the pursuit of knowledge, but this is no longer so; we now recognize that philosophy achieves this more adequately, more robustly, and more faithfully than fine art can. "Instead of maintaining its earlier necessity" and its higher significance, fine art has rightly been supplanted by philosophy. Thus, art's value, its end, is now outside itself in another, namely philosophy: "The *science/philosophy* [*Wissenschaft*]"¹¹ of art is therefore a greater need in our day than it was in days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is" (ÄI 22/*Lectures*, 11).

If this end-of-art critique is right, then on Hegel's view an artwork cannot be an end in itself, nor is it necessary for robust knowledge. Instead, artworks can at best be an opportunity for enlivening thought and giving us something to think about. Art may still be significant, but only as an enjoyable pastime in which the reality of self-conscious life may be reflected back for us. Moreover, this reality that is reflected back to us is more adequately representable and graspable by thought alone.

1.2. *Second Position: Art's Task Is to Remind Us (Human Beings) of a Core Truth about Ourselves*

In *Hegel's Aesthetics*, Lydia Moland writes that at its core, Hegel's philosophy of art holds that insofar as an experience of X "brings us back to a sense of our mutual

¹⁰As a reading of Hegel, the first position needs to account not merely for the end-of-art passages, but also for the passages that appear to defend the continued necessity and autonomy of art post-end-of-art, as I discuss in section 3.1. By contrast, if we have a coherent theory of art that also allows for a reading on which we can embrace all three theses—(i) the end-of-art, (ii) autonomy, and (iii) epistemic necessity—such that all of the major relevant passages have an intelligible and defensible reading within such a theory of art, it would suggest itself as a maximally charitable reading of Hegel's aesthetics. Such is the aim of this paper. I do not show here that the IP View is a compelling theory of art in its own right; that would be beyond the scope of this paper. For a fuller defense of the IP View, see Gentry, "Artworks Are Valuable for Their Own Sake."

¹¹For my account of what Hegel means by treating a subject of investigation as "a science," see "Hegel's Logic of Negation," 399–405.

formation with the world," X is a work of art.¹² Moland offers several variations of this core thesis, such as the following: "The overarching criteria of art remains: it must show humans' role in forming and being formed by the world and so as self-determining and free."¹³ On this definition, art is a truth-yielding experience, where the specific truth yielded is the idea of "mutual formation with the world."¹⁴ To yield that "truth" to us through experience is the unending "task" of art.¹⁵ Moland finds support for this view in something like the following passage: "The universal need for art [*allgemeine Bedürfnis zur Kunst*] . . . is the human rational [*vernünftige*] need to lift [*erheben*] the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again [*wiedererkennt*] his own self" (ÄI 42/*Lectures*, 31).¹⁶ The view of art that Moland's Hegel espouses is one in which the task of art is external to itself. Its task is to remind us of the truth about self-conscious beings such as ourselves, namely, that human beings are beings who are in mutual formation with the world. Anything that does this for us "counts as art."¹⁷

Leaving aside whether this problematically expands the scope of what should count as fine art (to include experiences with drugs that happen to remind us of the same, or categorizing perfumes as artworks, as has been recently argued by Brozzo¹⁸), it raises another worry. Moland dismisses the First Position discussed above by saying that there are many senses in which Hegel speaks of the "ends" of art¹⁹ but that none of these mean that it really ends; however, a defender of the First Position might reasonably argue that Moland's core interpretation amounts to saying that art's highest end is to reveal a truth that philosophy is better suited to reveal, which is precisely the First Position's critique of Hegel. In other words, a proponent of the First Position might agree with Moland's account of Hegel, but her Hegel just espouses the problematic end-of-art thesis. Thus, the First Position critique applies to her Hegel as well.

¹²Moland, *Aesthetics*, 305. Pinkard argues similarly that Hegel views art as a "collective practice of self-education . . . a way of collectively reflecting on what it means to be human" ("Romantic Art," 8). By contrast, Donougho analyzes six possible meanings of the "pastness" of art (only one of which I consider here). He argues that Hegel is right that "art is 'essentially' past" because "to gain a vantage point on a form of life is already to embalm it or lament its passing" ("Art and History," 189). I do not see the textual evidence for this view, and conceptually it is challenging to make sense of the worth of such a view of art, since it seems to be true of all reflection on experience. Problematically for Donougho's view, Hegel writes that good art is present to its time, since "only the present [*Gegenwart*] is fresh, the rest is paler and paler" (ÄI 581). Cf. Houlgate on the nonhistorical logical end of art and transition to religion ("End of Art," 264).

¹³Moland, *Aesthetics*, 146.

¹⁴Moland, *Aesthetics*, 305.

¹⁵Moland, *Aesthetics*, 305–6.

¹⁶Moland, *Aesthetics*, 19, 143, and 305.

¹⁷Moland, *Aesthetics*, 305.

¹⁸I do not see how, on Moland's account, one could deny Brozzo's conclusion that some perfumes are works of art worthy of special regard because they are a type of "perfumery" and are intentionally made, reflecting "ways preexisting works of art are or were correctly regarded, namely with a complex of attitudes that include openness to emotional suggestion and awareness of symbolism" ("Perfumes?," 30). Perhaps such an inclusion is not a problem for Moland's Hegel. If Brozzo's conclusion meant something like perfume can *become* a work of art, then I could envision a Duchamp *Fountain* scenario in which the perfume is the matter of a larger meta-artistic work, but perfumes as such seem like a great example of the types of objects that accounts of art need to be able to differentiate from if we are to retain the richer claims to the worth of art. Not all fine things are art.

¹⁹Moland, *Aesthetics*, 11.

Part of the problem is that although Moland denies the First Position critique, she neither directly accounts for those core passages that the First Position takes as evidence of Hegel's end-of-art thesis, nor does she explain how her definition of 'art' escapes the end-of-art thesis. To successfully deny the First Position requires explaining how those passages are to be interpreted; instead, Moland asserts, seemingly against Hegel, that art continues to be necessary for us. If art's defining task is, as Moland claims, to "bring us back to a sense of our mutual formation with the world,"²⁰ this idea of mutual formation appears to be an idea of philosophy, or at best of the philosophy of art, and certainly not an idea that is uniquely revealed through art. The only rebuttal I could see Moland making to the First Position (given her fundamental thesis about the task of art) would be to deny that philosophy reveals this "truth" just as well as or better than art. Moland could thus claim that art even now retains its status as "necessary" for us, as she seems to conclude,²¹ and thereby continues to have "everything left to do."²² If she took this line against the First Position, then it becomes a matter of showing how art remains necessary and is not subsumable by the more adequate method of philosophy. However, she does not offer such a line of reasoning.

Let us assume for the sake of argument that the Second Position is correct. The question then becomes this: if the Second Position is right, what reason do we have for thinking that art continues to be necessary for self-conscious life, given that philosophy has the same end of revealing this "idea" or truth about self-conscious life? If we cannot answer this question adequately, then it seems that the First Position critique of Hegel stands. And if it stands, then on Hegel's view, although artworks may be retained as a pleasant part of life and may enliven our thought, spurring true or helpful associations, in the end, art is not necessary thereto: "Thought and reflection have spread their wings above fine art." If this is right, then Hegel's answer to my guiding question would be a resounding "no": namely, artworks cannot be (for us now) an end in themselves, nor are they necessary for robust knowledge, much less both.

1.3. *Third Position: Art Is Necessary for the Life of Self-Consciousness*

In *After the Beautiful*, Robert Pippin appears to anticipate that something like the Second Position will bring us back to the critique of the First Position. To avoid the First Position critique, Pippin proposes rejecting Hegel's claim to art's pastness as a mistaken, excessive, and isolated set of claims that is not necessary to his philosophy of art or his broader account of self-consciousness. The suggestion is that by rejecting a handful of passages that ground the First Position critique, we can acknowledge the validity of the First Position but reject the idea that this is ground for dismissing the whole of Hegel's philosophy of art. In other words, Hegel's claim that art belongs to the past and is no longer necessary—since philosophy has spread its wings above the fine arts—is clearly an instance of him "overstating" the ability of philosophy and the limits of art, "failing to anticipate" where the fine

²⁰Moland, *Aesthetics*, 305.

²¹Moland, *Aesthetics*, 302.

²²Moland, *Aesthetics*, 306.

arts might go, and a “failure to imagine” art’s continued significance.²³ This then allows Pippin to defend his positive thesis about art without the need to adjust that core thesis to account for these First Position passages.

This is a highly productive strategy. Whereas the Second Position saw art as that which reminds us of the core truths about ourselves (namely that humans are “amphibious animals” of both thought and matter, and self-conscious beings in mutual formation with nature), on the Third Position reading of Hegel, art is a venue for a vital methodological “comportment.” It facilitates a comportment toward the self, the other, and the world that is vital. It facilitates an ability to see and understand more fully. In Pippin’s words,

This in effect redefines the problem rather than addresses it in its conventional form. How can a subject of thought and deeds that always experiences itself as beyond or more than its material states come to any resolution about who or what it actually “is”; how can it find satisfaction in the absence of any such resting place like its biological species-form?²⁴

Art is one vital way in which self-conscious beings begin to comport themselves toward themselves and the world in a way that is most adequate to who they are. Art helps facilitate a “reconciled ‘Geist’ as an accomplishment. Or, as Hegel says frequently, *Geist* is ‘a product of itself.’”²⁵ So, the Third Position, that art continues to be necessary as a formative mode of comportment toward the self and the world, might be summed up in Hegel’s own words: “Against this we must maintain that art’s vocation is to unveil the truth in the form of sensuous artistic configuration, to set forth the (un)reconciled [*versöhnten*] opposition just mentioned, and so to have its end and aim in itself, in this very setting forth and unveiling” (ÄI 64, Pippin’s translation).²⁶

Pippin’s modification of that passage to “unreconciled” stems from the broader continued need of self-consciousness to reconcile the oppositions between the inner freedom of the self and the external necessity of nature, between empty abstraction and concrete life, between subjective thought and objective experience (ÄI 63). Thus, the continued need for art and the necessity of art for self-consciousness stem from the nature of self-consciousness. Art is a product of self-consciousness. Through art, self-consciousness is able to reconcile those oppositions more adequately (though not finally).²⁷ Art thus represents an unending necessity for the life of self-consciousness.

If the Third Position is right, then Hegel’s answer to my guiding question would amount to the view that art is necessary for robust knowledge but has its end outside of itself: its end is the adequacy and growth of the life of self-consciousness. There is a variation of the Third Position that could affirm theses (i) and (ii) of the guiding question, which I will note in section 3.2. Regardless, the explicit rejection of thesis (iii) remains. Although Pippin does not explicitly

²³Pippin, *Beautiful*, 8.

²⁴Pippin, *Beautiful*, 46.

²⁵Pippin, *Beautiful*, 47.

²⁶Pippin, *Beautiful*, 47.

²⁷On Pippin’s view, this self-reflective mode of self-consciousness is evidenced in post-Romantic art like cubism, which takes itself as its content (“Abstract Art?” 244).

give an account of artworks that could facilitate this twofold affirmative answer of (i) the end of art thesis and (ii) the autonomy thesis, this does not mean that his view is inherently opposed to such a twofold affirmation.

2. HEGEL AND THE IP VIEW

I will briefly discuss a passage that intimates Hegel's answer to the guiding question of this article. I then outline how the IP View offers a charitable reading of Hegel that might reasonably lead us to affirm his "pastness" claims about a specific "vocation" of art, once we understand what, precisely, he had in mind with these claims.

2.1. *Hegel's Embrace of the Autonomy Thesis and Epistemic Necessity Thesis*

Whether or not Hegel's philosophy of art *actually* treats artworks as ends in themselves, Hegel *claims* that artworks must be viewed as ends in themselves and as necessary for robust knowledge. There is no shortage of passages that show this accord with the IP View. Take the following:

Now since the ultimate end [*Endzweck*], moral betterment, has pointed to a higher standpoint, we will have to vindicate this higher standpoint for art too. Thereby the false position, already noticed, is at once abandoned—the position, namely that art has to serve as a means to moral purposes [*Kunst als Mittel für moralische Zwecke*], and the moral end of the world in general [*moralischen Endzweck der Welt überhaupt*], by instructing and improving, and thus has its substantial aim [*substantiellen Zweck*], not in itself, but in something else [*nicht in sich, sondern in einem anderen*]. If on this account we now continue to speak of a final end and aim, we must in the first place get rid of the perverse idea which, in the question about an end, clings to the accessory meaning of the question, namely that it is one about utility [*Nutzen*]. The perversity lies here in this, that in that case the work of art is supposed to be for the sake of something else which is set before our minds in its place as that which is essential [*Wesentliche*] and as what ought to be [*Seinsollende*], so that then the work of art would have validity only as a useful tool [*nützliches Werkzeug*] for realizing this end [*Zweck*], which is independently valid on its own account outside the sphere of art. Against this we must maintain that art's vocation is to unveil [*enthüllen*] the truth [*Wahrheit*] in the form of sensuous artistic configuration, to set forth the reconciled opposition just mentioned, and so to have its end and aim in itself [*ihren Endzweck in sich*], in this very setting forth [*Darstellung*] and unveiling [*Enthüllung*]. For other ends, like instruction, purification, bettering, financial gain, struggling for fame and honour, have nothing to do with the work of art as such, and do not determine its nature [*bestimmen nicht den Begriff desselben*]. (ÄI 64/*Lectures*, 55)

Art's "end and aim" is "in itself." To treat it as a means to an end external to it is the "perverse" view of art, according to Hegel in this passage. First Position critics object that if "art's vocation is to unveil the truth," then it necessarily has its end in something else, namely "truth." However, this is not necessarily the case. There are some (possible) ends attainable through other ends if and only if the latter are treated as ends-in-themselves and not as means. These are final ends whose function as a means to a higher end depends paradoxically on their being treated as a final end. To treat them as means to some further end *de facto* negates the possibility of *this particular set* of further ends. For example, on some interpretations of neo-Aristotelian ethics or of Christian virtue ethics, to love someone as a means to the

highest good (such as *eudaimonia*) is to miss both aims; it misses both genuine love of another as a final end and, therein, the highest good, which is paradoxically made possible only by treating the other as a final end. So, on such a view, the possibility of the highest good is dependent on genuinely treating at least some means as final ends or “ends in themselves.” I understand Hegel’s claim that art must be treated as an end-in-itself, thereby becoming necessary for (i.e. the means for) robust knowledge, to have a similar final end-means relation, such that to treat it as a means to robust knowledge is to miss both.

I take Hegel’s conception of truth to be definable as the adequacy of the unity between a content and its manifestation, where this adequacy is not a matter of correctness, but rather something like what I have been calling “robust knowledge.” Leaving aside further questions about how to understand Hegel’s concept of truth, it is minimally clear in the above passage that whatever Hegel thinks “unveiling the truth” means, he appeals to it to support a view of art as an “end and aim in itself.” Thus, it seems Hegel *thinks* his philosophy of art takes artworks to be “ends in themselves” (ÄII 280). And treating them as ends in themselves facilitates a more robust vision or “unveiling” of the truth. Since the passage above (ÄI 64) sets out to deny the problematic (externally purposive) view of art, where the end of art is outside itself in what is morally good, it is clear that truth in this context cannot be interpreted as an end outside of art.²⁸ Instead, truth here is an internally purposive concept of the art in and for itself. Paradoxically, on the IP View (and, as I have suggested, on Hegel’s view as well), by being such an end in itself, art becomes a vital means of attaining robust knowledge. However, to treat it *as* a means to robust knowledge is to prevent the emergence of that very worth.

2.2. *The Internally Purposive View of Art as an End in Itself and Necessary for Robust Knowledge*

I turn now to the IP View of art. The IP View suggests a basis for viewing artworks as in accord with at least the second two theses: namely as (ii) autonomous ends-in-themselves that are more akin to organisms than artifacts, and also as (iii) necessary to robust knowledge, where this latter necessity does not contradict the former by making art a means to that end. This position, I suggest, will be compatible with the Third Position without treating Hegel’s end-of-art statements as “overstatements” or dismissing them as a “failure to imagine” art’s continued significance. My interest here is not to defend the IP View as a superior theory of art, but rather to sketch it as a coherent conception of art that facilitates a charitable reading of Hegel by embracing his autonomy thesis, epistemic-necessity thesis, and end-of-art thesis.

The Internally Purposive View of art (IP View) is the position that an artwork is properly understood as an internally purposive whole. A purposive whole is a

²⁸Carroll charges that the “content-manifestation” view of Hegel, Danto, and (under which, I presume, he would include) the IP View entails the conclusion that “all art is good,” and cannot account for contentless art or art without an “about-this-ness” quality (“Art Appreciation,” 4). My discussion of the IP View so far should have made clear why there is no such entailment to “all art is good,” as charged. For Danto’s own response to this charge, see his *End of Art*, 37. Can this charge be seriously applied to Hegel, who seems to contrast successes and failures internal to every artwork that he critiques, even those of the two artists of the absolute that he views so highly, namely Goethe and Schiller? Surely not.

whole whose essential characteristic is determined by its purpose. If we divide purposive wholes into two broad camps of externally purposive wholes (such as artifacts) and internally purposive wholes (such as organisms), then we can distinguish between externally purposive, defining characteristics of a whole in the former, and internally purposive characteristics of a whole in the latter. Common examples of what I call internally purposive wholes include organisms, but not clocks. But organisms are not the only kinds of internally purposive whole. Self-consciousness, potential forms of Artificial General Intelligence, and possible spiritual beings are other examples of internally purposive wholes that are more akin to organisms than artifacts in virtue of being internally purposive. Likewise, I submit that when Hegel speaks of the state as a whole with an “organic function” or of the *constitution* of the state as a kind of organism (GW 14.1 §316-A), he is employing this fundamental conception and classification of inner purposiveness of a whole in a manner similar to Aristotle’s conception of the soul as the principle of life that animates matter and defines its characteristic life activity.²⁹ To this end, when introducing his *Philosophy of Mind*, which (systematically) includes both the philosophy of art and morality, Hegel writes,

The books of Aristotle on the Soul, are . . . still by far the most admirable, perhaps even the sole, work of true philosophical value [*speculativem Interesse*] on this topic. The main aim [*wesentliche Zweck*] of a philosophy of Geist can only be to reintroduce this concept/Begriff [i.e. a self-determining principle of life] into the theory of mind, and so reinterpret the lesson of those Aristotelian books. (Hegel, GW 20:380)

So it seems to be a conception of the whole as internally purposive that Hegel has in view when he writes that art as a product of the artistic imagination “must be formed and rounded into an *organic whole* [*organischen Totalität*]” (ÄII 345/*Lectures*, 979, emphasis added),³⁰ or when he writes, “It is now clear that every genuinely poetical work of art is an inherently infinite [i.e. self-bounded] *organism* [*Organismus*]: rich in matter and disclosing this matter in a correspondent appearance” (ÄI 361/*Lectures*, 996).

When Hegel uses terms like ‘organism,’ ‘organic whole,’ and ‘organic unity’ (*organische Einheit*, ÄII 347, 351) to describe artworks or the state, he means that artworks or the state should be understood as animated by an internally purposive form.³¹ While this claim entails that artworks and the state are more akin in kind to organisms than artifacts, it does not commit him to a reductive identification of one particular kind of internally purposive whole (such as self-consciousness) with another (such as a tree). Likewise, calling an artwork an “organic whole” is not a reductive identification with organisms. Instead, it picks out the mereological difference whereby such wholes as artworks, organisms, and self-consciousness can be called internally purposive and animated, or said to have an inner “life,” while artifacts, inanimate matter, (mere) logical systems, and the like cannot.

A clock has an externally given function or design by which the mechanical parts are determined to be properly organized. If a gear is jammed, the clock does not

²⁹See Ng, *Life*, for an excellent account of the concept of life in Hegel’s *Logic*; for my take on Ng, see Gentry, “Life.”

³⁰Unless otherwise indicated, all emphases are in the original.

³¹See also GW 28.3:941, 948.

perform the function it ought to perform according to an external end, namely, telling time. The clock is thereby an externally purposive whole. For an internally purposive whole, by contrast, the identity is not determined by an externally given end; rather, the end that defines the function of the parts is given by the whole itself qua kind and is an idea of purposiveness that must be abstracted from the whole. The heart beats in the deer for the sake of the growth of the whole; the growth of the whole is not for an external end such as being food for a mountain lion, but for the sake of itself as determined by the kind of whole it is. Philippa Foot offers a nice account of this broadly Aristotelian distinction between internal and external ends in organisms in her account of moral goodness as a kind of natural goodness.³² The IP View holds a similar conception with respect to a work of art as a natural good, where this means that an artwork is an internally purposive whole such that its normative standard is determined internal to itself qua kind, not through an external end (i.e. not through an end determined by the artist or viewer).³³ This means that the idea of the whole is not identical to the original idea of the artist by which it came to be. The latter is an external end and becomes internal only to the degree that the whole manifests the artist's original idea. Regardless, it is the internal end that is normative for the parts as their formative end.

To understand how the idea of the whole can serve as an internally emergent normativity that governs understanding of the parts, their relation to each other, and their relation to the whole, it is worth taking the following two last analogies from nature. While wings are parts whose function facilitates the flight of the wren, the wings of an ostrich do not facilitate its flight. Likewise, the muscles and claws on a leopard facilitate the climbing of trees, while the same parts in a cheetah do not. In both cases, the relative impotency of those parts in the former two (wren and leopard) would be judged as sickness, injury, or weakness by the standard of the whole where the concept of the whole is determined by its kind. By contrast, in the latter two (ostrich and cheetah), the same inability would not be judged to be a defect, but rather the normal functioning of that kind of whole. Thus, the same parts are assessed by opposing standards. This is because the standard always comes from the internally purposive whole itself. (In these examples, the wholes just happen to be organisms.)

Likewise, the IP View holds that parts and their relation to each other and to the whole are adequately assessable only through a proper conception of the kind

³²On the inner purposiveness or normative characteristics of a natural kind (such as a deer), see Foot, *Natural Goodness*, 34; on the transition to human beings and virtue as a kind of natural good, see 47. The IP View expands a natural kind account like Foot's to works of art. This expansion might seem as misguided to contemporaries as Foot's expansion of natural kinds to human morality was to her colleagues at Oxford.

³³The influence of Aristotle on the IP View is most visible not in his *Poetics* or *Ethics*, but rather in his conception of the soul as a purposive principle of life in *Generation* II.1 and *De Anima* II.4, 415b26–28. Consider *AI* 125–28: at *AI* 128, Hegel draws a direct connection between the concept in art and Aristotle's conception in *De Anima* of organisms; cf. Hegel, *GW* 20 §245. For more on the influence of Aristotle's hylomorphic organisms on Hegel's systematic conception of life, see Ferrarin, *Hegel and Aristotle*, 410, 142–46; Gentry, "Concept of Life." See also Ng's excellent account of Hegel on life and inner purposiveness, although she does not emphasize the connection with Aristotle (*Life*, 43). For a related account of life in the artistic approach of British romantics influenced by the German romantics, see Wilson, *Apprehension of Life*, 21–45.

of whole. The 2012 film *Les Misérables* aims to manifest the raw emotions of the characters through the same music as the Broadway production, but performed by excellent actors instead of professional vocalists. By contrast, a defining quality of Broadway production is vocal excellence. Both artworks use the same music and storyline, but the lack of Broadway-quality vocalists in the film is no more a sign of a defect than is the Broadway production's lack of excellent actors in favor of vocal excellence. The former aims to manifest the raw reality of the characters and the story such that there appears to be "something selfish about striving for the pretty version [when the character] is in despair."³⁴ Instead, as the director and actors of the film version reflect, they strove to "apply the raw truth to the melody."³⁵ On the IP View, to understand either work, to assess its relative successes or failures, requires looking to the kind of whole it is, since the same parts in one kind of whole may have a different internal purpose than they do in the other. The normative standard must always be the given whole itself. This, I take it, is something like what Hegel has in mind when he says,

In whatever form dramatic poetry brings the action on the stage, what is true in and for itself [*an und für sich*] is shown in the *specific way in which this effectiveness comes on the scene, takes a different, and indeed an opposed, form according to whether what is kept dominant in the individuals and their actions and conflicts is their substantive basis or alternatively their subjective caprice, folly, and perversity.* (ÄI 547/*Lectures*, 1194, emphasis added, translation modified)³⁶

The IP View, while sharing a similar view of internally purposive wholes with Aristotle and Kant, differs on the nature of art. Both Aristotle and Kant took art to have an animating form only homonymously, or more accurately and in contrast to the IP View, neither saw art as actually having an animating form akin to organisms.³⁷ An artwork has more in common (hylomorphically) with a house (artifact) on Aristotle's view than it would with a plant.³⁸ By contrast, and along with the IP View, Hegel understood an artwork to be an internally purposive whole.³⁹

I would like to address a probable critique here, namely, that this claim appears to align the IP View with other widely critiqued metaphysical "top-down" theories of the nature of art. For example, such recent accounts as Dominic Lopes's Buck

³⁴"Les Misérables Singing Live Featurette."

³⁵"Les Misérables Singing Live Featurette."

³⁶I have modified the Knox translation to better reflect the original. For example, Knox dropped one of Hegel's key phrases, "Das an und für sich."

³⁷Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 5:304. Zuckert's account of formal purposiveness and the purposiveness of the form of the object brings Kant's conception of art closer to the IP View (*Beauty and Biology*, 181–230; "Purposiveness," 599–622). Ginsborg's account of Kant's teleology and Aristotle's principle of the soul is likewise helpful here (*Normativity of Nature*, 305–6; cf. 262).

³⁸Aristotle's *Poetics* identifies a "soul" of drama or tragedy, which might sound like the hylomorphic principle of life in an internally purposive whole such as a plant or animal, as we find in *De Anima* II.4, 415b26–28. However, in the *Poetics*, it seems this is an example of a soul only homonymously; see Gentry, "Concept of Life," 379–90. For Aristotle's homonymy principle, see *Meteorology* IV.12, 390; Frey, "Organic Unity," 168–71. For an account of the matter of poetry in Hegel's conception of art that corresponds nicely to Frey's account of matter in Aristotle, see Wilson, "Hegel and the Matter of Poetry," 9–13, which helpfully develops a dynamic conception of what Hegel takes to constitute the matter of the hylomorphic whole of an artwork.

³⁹This inner purposive whole involves the concept, its manifestation, the form, the concrete particularity of the material, and the shape through which the content is given life.

Passing Theory of Art critiques all such “top-down” theories as problematic, metaphysical accounts of what art is.⁴⁰ Space constraints preclude saying much about these divisions beyond observing that the common categorization of Hegel’s philosophy of art as a top-down theory, if right, would not be consistent with the IP View. However, categorizing Hegel’s philosophy of art as either top-down or bottom-up misses the heart of Hegel’s thought. It is neither a metaphysical top-down theory, nor an empirical bottom-up account. Instead, it is the view that art is precisely a central part of the reevaluation of what defines a thing’s truth. It would be closest to call the IP View an idealist view, but since the accuracy of that would depend on a specific understanding of idealism, it is best at present to pass over such labels altogether. Put crudely and problematically, but perhaps helpfully, on the IP View the metaphysical conception of the whole is necessarily constituted through the empirical parts, and the empirical is recognizable through the metaphysical conception of the parts generated through and by a specific kind of whole.

In this sense, there is no opposition between the empirical and metaphysical; indeed, any such opposition misses the dialectical nature of the work of art and its very significance for robust knowledge. On Hegel’s view, the truth of a thing cannot be known in abstraction from the concrete particulars through which it is manifest and self-actualized.⁴¹ To this end, Hegel contrasts the inner purposiveness of an artwork and organism with the external or abstract purposiveness of an artifact (such as a clock) whose end (telling time) is external to the whole:

If the organism is to manifest itself as ensouled [*beseelt*] . . . this unity must display itself in the first place as an unintended identity and therefore must not assert itself as *abstract* purposiveness [*Zweckmäßigkeit*]. The parts must neither come before our eyes merely as means to a specific end [as in an artifact or in a “regular system”] and as in service to it, nor may they abandon their distinction from one another in construction and shape. (ÄI 130/GW 28.3:1159/*Lectures*, 125, emphasis added)

Put differently, the normative idea of the whole is self-emergent from the whole and its kind, whereas an artifact is organized through an “abstract purposiveness” or external idea as the design or form of the whole.

Nor is this mereological relationship of parts to whole one in which the concrete particulars of an aesthetic idea are merely examples or instantiations of a quasi-Platonic form, as if the material parts merely reflected or approximated the truth of the whole or its form. Instead, the abstract concept cannot remain indifferent to its manifestation; adequate concepts live and change through their manifestation.⁴² The whole is not indifferent to its moments and parts; rather, it

⁴⁰Lopes, *Beyond Art*, 129–30.

⁴¹To be “self-actualized” in the case of an artwork means that the idea of the artwork is emergent through the work as a whole. “Artistic intent” is not the authority for criticism of an artwork on the IP View and must, like all other art-critical claims, ground itself in the artwork as a whole. This autonomy of the work is another way in which art is differentiable from symbolic forms such as signs, individual words, and artifacts. Such symbolic forms might serve as vehicles of content, but that content can be reassigned such that the symbolic form comes to symbolize something different. By contrast, the artwork is not a symbolic form or vehicle for content.

⁴²Speight reads Hegel’s concept of *Enthüllung* or “unveiling” of the truth to be a “making explicit an implicit content” (*Aesthetics*, 387). There are two readings of Speight’s meaning here. If we

is through the concrete particulars that the true concept of the whole emerges. So, for example, a performance of Sibelius's Violin Concerto in D Minor is not a copy or expression of some preexisting work,⁴³ as if the composition itself were the work of art; instead, the work of art is the manifestation of the composition and its performance, its interpretation, and expression, "which can be performed only by practicing artists with their *living* [*lebendige*] skill both spiritual [*geistige*] and technical" (ÄI 279/*Lectures*, 909, emphasis added). This means that the artwork is not reducible to one performance, nor is the artwork a mere aggregate or average of all of its performances. Rather the work is something transient yet persistent in a performance. This is the case not only for performative arts, but also for nonperformative arts, since the sociality of a work is shaped by the age in which it happens to be being perceived, "and so every work of art is a dialogue [*Zwiesgespräch*] with everyone who engages it [*davorsteht*]" (ÄI 259/*Lectures*, 264). What kind of presuppositions, vision, and reflective awareness the reader has when approaching a novel matters. What the *Brothers Karamazov* can be for a reader of the twenty-first century will of course be different from what it could be for readers in Dostoevsky's age or will be for readers two hundred years from now. After all, "the artist belongs to his own time, lives in its customs, outlooks, and ideas," and we in ours (ÄI 259/*Lectures*, 264). Rich and full recognition of the work is not limited to just one of those contextual encounters, for "to cling to one of these in their opposition leads to an equally false extreme"; it can instead be each equally (ÄI 260/*Lectures*, 265).⁴⁴ This claim does not suggest a transcendent form of the artwork that supersedes each moment. However, to say more here about this would take us into a Hegelian answer to the problem of identity in the persistence of concrete particulars across time, since a similar set of worries arises for the actions and experiences of individuals over time.

For now, I will say only that the inked notes on the page of Sibelius's masterpiece are not the work of art, but rather a dynamic, internally constitutive part of the whole that includes its performance and the connectivity of the diverse manifestations through time. There can be many compelling performances that can lay equal claim to being an excellent instance of Sibelius's Violin Concerto in D Minor, even

understand him to mean "making obvious or unavoidable," then this would be problematic both as a reading of Hegel and as a theory of art. However, I take Speight to mean a manifestation of that which must be manifest to be what it is. By analogy, an acorn is an oak in potential, but the process of actualizing itself according to its kind is a way of making explicit the kind of thing it is. I think this is how we should understand Hegel's conception of art as manifesting its own content (even if that content is noncognitive or affective). I also take Pippin to agree with this view; see, for example, his discussion of *Entäußerung* ("Absence," 398).

⁴³Regarding works with copies that are indistinguishable from the original, see Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 99–111; see also Grant's examination of Stang's critique of originalists' commitments in the face of indistinguishable copies ("Artistic Value," 420–22). Relevant to this debate is Heidegger's wonderful account of the "rootedness" of the artist that emerges in and informs the artwork itself; see his "1955 Memorial Address."

⁴⁴Importantly, this is not to claim that all epochally informed interpretations *are* equal. As Hegel writes, "At certain epochs, indeed, the public may be corrupted by a highly praised 'culture,' i.e. by having put into its head the perverse opinions and follies of critics" (ÄI 538); instead, the artwork, "as the living actuality [*lebendige Wirklichkeit*] of nature, and of art too," must always be the authority for the worth and validity of a given encounter (ÄI 538). We are not justified in imposing external standards on the artwork.

when these performances differ through incompatible interpretive choices. So, we might meaningfully say that a given performance was perfection, even while recognizing another, incompatible performance as equally perfection of the artwork. So too, Hegel writes, "The beautiful is the perfect" and "the perfect is what corresponds with its aim, what nature or art intended to produce in the formation of the object within its genus [*Gattung*] and species" (ÄI 28/*Lectures*, 17).⁴⁵ He follows Hirt in calling this perfect or "adequate" inner aim of an artwork the characteristic of the artwork. The "characteristic" of the whole "refers to the purposiveness [*Zweckmäßigkeit*] with which the particular detail of the artistic form manifests [*heraushebt*] the content it is meant to present" (ÄI 29/*Lectures*, 18).⁴⁶ With art, we should not look to an external form or "prescriptions for artists" as classical or rationalist conceptions of perfection would, or as we do when judging artifacts and any object whose form is externally given or designed. Instead, we must look to the given whole to see "how it has displayed itself in reality, in works of art, without wishing to provide rules for their production" (ÄI 29/GW 28.3:964/*Lectures*, 18). This is because the "perfection" or normativity is determined by the life of the whole in question and so is not a static external standard. The artwork "should unfold [*entfalten*] an inner life [*Lebendigkeit*], feeling, soul, a content and spirit, which is just what we call the significance [*Bedeutung*] of a work of art" (ÄI 31/*Lectures*, 20).

Just as the ideal of the flourishing life is not a single standard toward which all lives aim, but rather a dynamic good that includes within it an infinite (though not unrestricted) range of particular manifestations of what such a flourishing whole might be, so is it with art.

2.3. *Formal Position of the IP View*

I take the IP View to have several basic commitments, identifiable through the following three encapsulations:⁴⁷

I. Artworks are a specific kind of internally purposive whole. Their value, the derivative value of the experience of them as such, and the basis for evaluating them stem from the kind of whole they are. Therefore, if the whole itself is the relevant standard, the genuine and thoroughgoing experience of that whole is a prerequisite to any potential artistic value in the experience or adequate assessment of the work of art in question. One must experience the artwork on its own terms and let the kind of whole be the normative standard for engagement with it; otherwise, we risk following the person who judges the tree by the standards of a deer. They are different kinds of organic wholes, and we come to know the given whole through genuine engagement with it on its own terms.

⁴⁵Hegel continues to use "genus and species" (*Gattung und Art*) in relation to art; see ÄI 213.

⁴⁶"Die abstrakte Bestimmung des Charakteristischen betrifft also die Zweckmäßigkeit, in welche das Besondere der Kunstgestalt den Inhalt, den es darstellen soll, wirklich heraushebt" (ÄI 29). Hegel adopts this view of excellence in fine art and "what is implied in the Idea of the beautiful" from his understanding of Goethe: "To this end we must give pride of place to Goethe's account of the beautiful," which he takes to have been first articulated by Aloys Hirt (ÄI 28; cf. ÄI 31). For my account of Goethe's conception of art, see Gentry, "Goethe's Theory of Art," 2023.

⁴⁷For a fuller account of what I call the IP View, see Gentry, "Artworks as Living Wholes."

II. What counts as a successful moment in one work of art, due to internal considerations of that work, may count as a defect in another work of art for the same reason, just as the absence of the ability to walk is a defect in the deer qua deer, while the same is not a defect in a tree for the same reason (i.e. by appeal to the kind of organic whole that a tree is). However, like a conceptual whole, the artistic whole becomes the whole that it is in part through the determinations and directives of a self-conscious subject. So, like a conceptual whole, an artwork is a whole that is unified by a conceptual sense of what it is. This does not mean that the nature or purposiveness of the artistic whole is a matter of artistic intent. On the contrary, though the artist gives birth to the work of art, it stands as an external whole whose unity and significance may exceed (or fall short of) the original intent of the artist.

III. The work of art is a whole born out of two sources, namely nature and self-consciousness, and emerges as a unique third that is irreducible to the two. It alone, as an artistic whole, is the standard by which its parts, moments, and experiential effects are to be judged (qua work of art). To understand or experience the whole requires understanding or experiencing the parts, moments, and effects; but to understand these parts, moments, and effects requires understanding the whole. There is no clear path into that circle of understanding or experiencing; it is a process into which one must step and begin to engage. In that process, the work of art as a whole emerges more adequately for the perceiving subject. Likewise, the relative significances of the parts, moments, and effects continue to emerge. This is not a vicious circle, but rather a productive dialectic, similar to Gadamer's hermeneutic circle.⁴⁸ Just as a deer is not knowable apart from the essential parts and functions of a deer, even though those parts and functions are not intelligible without a concept of the whole, so too the work of art must be engaged with on its own terms so that both the whole and its parts may mutually self-emerge for the perceiving subject.

3. A CHARITABLE READING AND WHERE THIS LEAVES US

3.1. *Hegel's Absolute Art after the "End-of-Art"*

So, what might Hegel have meant in the passages that comprise the end-of-art thesis discussed above in connection with the First Position? I submit that, against the First Position, we should understand the end-of-art passages to mean in part that "bondage [*Gebundensein*] to a particular subject-matter [*Gehalt*] and a mode of portrayal suitable for this material alone are for artists today something past [*für den heutigen Künstler etwas Vergangenes*], and art therefore has become a free instrument" (ÄI 579/*Lectures*, 605). It seems to me that the First Position, which has dominated the narrative on Hegel in aesthetics outside of Hegel studies, and which is also commonly held within Hegel studies, depends on a specific set of

⁴⁸Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 167. E.g. "every work of art is a dialogue [*Zwiesgespräch*] with everyone who engages it" (ÄI 259). I take Ameriks's claim—that the Romantic, empirical "openness" is an important dialectical part of a productive circle with Kantian a priori form—to be an approximation of the kind of productive circle that Hegel actually has in mind, though Ameriks does not read Hegel in this way. See Ameriks, "Romanticism," 52, 62–63, on the "open circle" model of formation and knowledge.

interpretations of those key passages from his introduction in isolation. However, this view is very difficult to square with Hegel's actual discussion of "the end [*Ende*] of the romantic form of art" (ÄI 576–84) in his lectures, where the entire discussion proceeds through comparison, contrasting the end of romantic art with "modern," "contemporary," and "absolute" art of "artists today," which Hegel states in no uncertain terms continues to hold its significance for us.

Let us consider for a moment what Hegel says about absolute art in his discussion of the "end" of romantic art. Here he describes what characterizes the autonomy and necessity of art after the end of those historical forms of art. First, unlike symbolic, classical, and romantic art, absolute art is characterized by freedom:

In our day . . . freedom of thought has taken hold of the artist too, and has made them, so to say, a *tabula rasa* in respect of the material and the form of their productions, after the necessary particular stages of the romantic art-form have been traversed. Bondage to a particular subject-matter [*Gehalt*] and a mode of portrayal suitable for this material alone are for artists today something past [*Vergangenes*], and art therefore has become a free instrument which the artist can wield in proportion to his subjective skill in relation to any content [*Inhalt*] of whatever kind. The artist thus stands above specific consecrated forms and configurations and moves free in and for himself [*bevegt sich frei für sich*], independent of the subject-matter and mode of conception in which the holy and eternal was previously made visible to human apprehension. . . . Today there is no material which stands in and for itself [*an und für sich*] above this relativity. (ÄI 579/*Lectures*, 605)

Goethe is an example of an artist of the absolute on Hegel's view, because he draws freely on material and forms from symbolic, classical, and romantic periods, and because he readily transcends all three as his subject matter requires. Far from classifying Goethe's art as symbolic, classical, or romantic, Hegel points to Goethe's ability to deploy all three "shapes" of art at will in the service of the integrity of the artistic whole. For example, he says that Goethe "is a master of *symbolic* depiction" (ÄI 558/*Lectures*, 583, emphasis added), employing "*classical* syllabic measures," (ÄII 392/*Lectures*, 1031, emphasis added) and "above all Goethe and Schiller have acquired a mastery in this field [i.e. *romantic* poetry]" (ÄII 475/*Lectures*, 1118), evidenced, for example, in Goethe's poem "Wiederfinden" in the *Divan*. "Here love is transferred wholly into the imagination, its movement" (ÄI 584/*Lectures*, 610). This freedom characterizing their work leads Hegel to claim, "Schiller and Goethe . . . have not lived merely as bards of their time, but as more universal poets" (ÄII 512/*Lectures*, 1156); they are examples of artists who transcend the historical shapes of art. This is because they are able to draw on those forms and shapes as necessitated by *the given idea itself*, as the content of an internally purposive, autonomous whole. The artwork remains "in and for itself" the actualization of the freedom of thought of the artist.

It is key, from Hegel's perspective, that external forms do not determine Goethe's material or content. The freedom and necessity of his thought determine both the material and content of his artworks: "for this purpose [such an artist] needs his supply of pictures, modes of configuration [*Gestaltungsweisen*], earlier forms of art which, taken in themselves are indifferent to him and only become important if they seem to him to be those most suitable for precisely this or that material" (ÄI 579/*Lectures*, 606). To produce excellent art, after the supposed

“end of art,” the “great artist today needs in particular the free development [*freien Ausbildung*] of the spirit” (ÄI 580/*Lectures*, 606), where the “free spirit has mastered” the subjectivity of perspectives and external forms of experience. The artist masters these precisely insofar as he or she “sees in them no absolutely sacrosanct conditions for exposition and mode of configuration, but ascribes value to them only on the strength of the higher content [*höheren Gehalt*] which in the course of his re-creation he puts into them as adequate to them” (ÄI.580/*Lectures*, 606). “In this way every form and every material is now at the service and command of the artist whose talent and genius is explicitly freed from the earlier limitation to one specific art-form [*Beschränkung auf eine bestimmte Kunstform befreit ist*]” (ÄI 580/*Lectures*, 606).

The artist is not limited by external requirements, but by the inner necessity of his or her own experience and self-consciousness:

In this self-transcendence art is nevertheless a withdrawal of man into himself, a descent into his own breast, whereby art strips away from itself all fixed restrictions to a specific range of content and treatment, and makes *Humanus* its new holy of holies: i.e. the depth and heights of the human heart as such, mankind in its joys and sorrows, its strivings, deeds, and fates. Herewith the artist acquires his subject-matter in himself and is the human spirit actually self-determining [*selbst bestimmende*] and considering [*betrachtende*], mediating [*ersinnende*], and expressing [*ausdrückende*] the infinity of its feelings and situations: nothing that can be living in the human breast is alien to the spirit any more. (ÄI 581/*Lectures*, 607)⁴⁹

The conclusion of the end-of-art thesis is that art is free now to actualize anything. This does not mean that the freedom is “caprice,” since art still faces the “fundamental condition of art’s being present in its integrity” (ÄI 578/*Lectures*, 604). Hegel still holds that art must be of its age to be excellent art. It should not try to copy a former age (ÄI 581). The difference is that an artist of the absolute can employ matter and form at will as the particular idea of the artwork demands. The artist is unconstrained by external requirements of matter, form, and subject-matter; instead, he or she is constrained only by the inner necessity of the given work itself.

This self-emergent, inner requirement of art is the autonomy of art in its freedom, which simultaneously makes it indispensable for robust knowledge: “the requirement is only this, that for the artist the content shall constitute the substance, the inmost truth, of his consciousness [*innerste Wahrheit seines Bewußtseins*] and make his chosen mode of presentation necessary” (ÄI 577–78/*Lectures*, 604); and

all materials, whatever they be and from whatever period and nation they come, acquire their artistic truth only when imbued with living and contemporary interest. It is in this interest that artistic truth fills man’s breast, provides his own mirror-image, and brings truth home to our feelings and ideas. It is the appearance and activity of imperishable humanity in its many-sided significance and endless all-round development [*unendlichen Herumbildung*] which in this reservoir of human situations and feelings can now constitute the absolute content [*absoluten Gehalt*] of our art. (ÄI 581–82/*GW* 28.3:944/*Lectures*, 608, emphasis added)

⁴⁹Cf. *GW* 12:172.

This is why Goethe's ability to draw freely on any form and material as the idea required strikes Hegel as an example of such an artist of the absolute freed from constraints external to that inner content.

The artist of the absolute, on Hegel's view, is free to bring to life the dynamic, living reality of human life and self-consciousness. So, freed from its historical shapes, art has only its "essential nature" remaining; namely, "art has nothing else for its vocation [*Beruf*] but to set forth in an adequate sensuous present [*adäquater, sinnlicher Gegenwart herauszustellen*] what is itself inherently rich in content, and the philosophy of art must make it its chief task to comprehend in thought what this fullness of content and its beautiful mode of appearance are" (ÄI 584/*Lectures*, 611). This is quite literally Hegel's final word in the section on the "end of the romantic form of art."

Also worth considering is his final line of the entire aesthetic lectures, a farewell to his students: "it is my final wish that *the higher and indestructible bond of the Idea of beauty and truth may link us and keep us firmly united now and for ever*" (ÄII 586/*Lectures*, 1237, emphasis added). This is a strange farewell if we think that art has lost its significance and truth for us, particularly when we recall that Hegel defines beauty as the unity in art of abstract thought with its adequate manifestation in reality, and that "appearance itself is essential to essence. Truth [*Wahrheit*] would not be truth if it did not show itself and appear [*schien und erschien*], if it were not truth *for someone and for itself*, as well as for the spirit in general too" (ÄI 19/*Lectures*, 8; cf. GW 11:323–24).

In short, unlike historical forms, art now cannot purport to be sufficient for or adequate to robust knowledge, although, precisely in its freedom to actualize thought, it is rightly regarded as *necessary* for robust knowledge (since the need to actualize itself remains a condition of robust knowledge): "Herewith the artist acquires his subject-matter in himself and is the human spirit actually self-determining and considering, mediating, and expressing the infinity of its feelings and situations: nothing that can be living in the human breast is alien to the spirit any more" (ÄI 581/*Lectures*, 607).

The charitable reading facilitated by the IP View, as well as by a systematic reading of Hegel, is this: Hegel's aim in his lectures on aesthetics is determined by his broader aim of giving a systematic account of self-conscious life. In virtue of being an autonomous end in itself, excellent art is necessary for robust knowledge because it

reconciles within itself, both the extremes which have been mentioned, because it unites metaphysical universality with the precision of real particularity. Only so is it grasped absolutely in its truth: for, on the one hand, over against the sterility of one-sided reflection, it is in that case fertile, since, in accordance with its own Concept, it has to develop into a totality of specifications, and it itself, like its exposition, contains the necessity of its particularizations [*Notwendigkeit seiner Besonderheiten*] and of their progress and transition one into another; on the other hand, the particularizations, to which a transition has been made, carry in themselves the universality and essentiality of the Concept, as the proper particularizations whereof they appear. (ÄI 33/*Lectures*, 22)

Art achieves its unique contribution to robust knowledge, not by being a means to that further end, but rather by displaying that unity freely from within (i.e. by its very autonomy).

Additionally, key developments in the standpoint of reason through history required art, and so art in general was necessary for the phenomenological advancement of reason (according to his system). What Hegel has in view here can be understood by analogy: Leibniz and Newton could not have developed calculus in a vacuum. While calculus is now (for us) among the mathematical tools at reason's disposal and facilitates advances in reason not previously available, and while calculus does not depend on any preceding faulty historical developments in the history of mathematics, nor even on most of its positive developments, there is nevertheless an obvious sense in which calculus is the product of a necessary phenomenological history that does depend on the successes and errors that constitute the historical development and movement in mathematics. Now, there were periods in history when optimism about the worth of art was such that it was viewed as *the* source of robust knowledge (as the Schlegel brothers can be interpreted to have thought). If we think that art is both an end in itself and necessary for robust knowledge, as the IP View maintains, we might rightly claim that *on this view* we should no longer take art to be *sufficient* for robust knowledge, as it was at times taken to be by some of the Romantics. Nevertheless, it continues to be an end in itself and *necessary* for robust knowledge. As such, it is now rightly viewed as a part of a broader network by which robust knowledge emerges for self-conscious beings.

If this is the case, then what has changed (historically speaking) is our understanding of what constitutes knowledge. We now (on this view) understand robust knowledge to incorporate art as a necessary method (though not the only one).⁵⁰ If this is right, then it follows that our conception of what it means to have robust knowledge, to have our vision formed in part by art, has sublated—has taken into itself—the necessity of art as an end in itself without reducing robust knowledge to that which is graspable most fully or finally in art, as some of the Romantics seem to suggest.⁵¹

The problem with the following oft-quoted passage is that we are neither justified in taking it out of context of the whole of his aesthetics, nor in ignoring the second half of the sentence itself: “*In all these respects* art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past [*ein Vergangenes*]. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been *transferred into our ideas* [*in unsere Vorstellung verlegt*]” (ÄI 22/*Lectures*, 11, emphasis added). We must

⁵⁰This view does not commit us to a claim that artworks must conform to one standard of art, as if movements like impressionism and dadaism, or kinds of art such as poetry and sculpture, could serve as the norm to which all art forms ought to conform. Here the IP View agrees with numerous well-known critiques of manifesto theories of art that prioritize one kind or style as true art. Such views have been thoroughly critiqued by Danto (*End of Art*, 34) and Strawson (“Works of Art,” 201), and are broadly rejected now under the “top-down” theory of art (see Lopes, *Beyond Art*, 79, 82), though there are also problems with this latter term, as I suggested earlier.

⁵¹Martha Nussbaum’s account of literature’s role in the formation of the moral imagination in “Finely Aware and Richly Responsible” is a nice example of the IP View’s thesis about how art can be both an end in itself and, thereby, necessary to wisdom (*Love’s Knowledge*, 148–63).

hold in view the specificity of “in all these respects” and the sublation claim that *art* or the “truth of art” “has been transferred into our ideas.” The latter is a claim to the sublation of art. That which sublates (here our ideas) does not remain the same. To say that philosophy sublates art is not equivalent to the claim that philosophy turns out to have been more adequate all along; rather, it is a claim about the necessity of the *becoming* of philosophy into something more adequate than it had been for achieving its own end. The end-of-art thesis is as much a claim about the pastness of the false view of philosophy as it is a claim about the pastness of the false view of art. Rightly understood, “philosophy has to consider an object in its necessity, not merely according to subjective necessity or external ordering, classification, etc.; it has to unfold and approve the object, according to the necessity of its own inner nature [*Notwendigkeit seiner eigenen inneren Natur*]” (ÄI 23/*Lectures*, 11). Since Hegel criticizes those who view art “as not being in and for itself necessary in our ideas [*an und für sich in der Vorstellung notwendig*] but as a purely subjective pleasure, or a merely accidental sense” (ÄI 34/*Lectures*, 23), and since his fundamental account of art is that it is the actualization of abstract thought in reality, it appears that to achieve its own end, philosophy must take up the “truth of art” as internally necessitated by itself for more adequate knowledge.

Finally, if this is right, it would also follow that Hegel’s claim about philosophy is not a placing of *academic philosophy* or philosophy historically understood, above art, as more adequate than art. Instead, Hegel is redefining how we should understand philosophy or the love of wisdom as a genuine pursuit of robust knowledge, which includes fine art as an internal part of the method of reason toward robust knowledge. Philosophy, on this view, is repurposed. Instead of “philosophy,” call the domain of thought that comes before the sublation of art “specious reasoning.” True philosophy is a particular method of thought that has become more adequate to its end by *becoming*, through the sublation of art, that which can actualize “abstract generality into a concrete totality [*konkreten Totalität*] of ideas, aims [*Zwecke*], actions, and events and adds to this process their inspection seriatim; it deserts the inner world of pure feeling and works it out into a world of objective actuality [*Welt objektiver Wirklichkeit*] developed likewise in the inner sphere of imagination” (ÄII 330).⁵² And again, “Thinking is only a reconciliation between reality and truth within thinking itself. But [artistic] creation and formation [*Schaffen und Bilden*] is a reconciliation [*Versöhnung*] in the form of a real phenomenon itself, even if this form be presented only spiritually” (ÄII 342/*Lectures*, 976, emphasis added). The adequacy conditions for robust knowledge have not changed even if we rightly deny the validity of previously (historically) held positions that art is adequate to and indeed sufficient for yielding robust knowledge. Such a view must remain for us a thing of the past.

⁵²I understand Hegel to hold that true philosophy as the domain of “speculative thought” (ÄII 329) sublates the “artistic imagination [*Kunst-phantasie*]” (ÄI 475) or “künstlerische Phantasie” (ÄII 332). Hegel uses a variety of terms for this artistic ability to create and form, even if this process remains purely internal to thought: “wenn auch nur geistig vorgestellten Form” (ÄII 342). Since the artistic imagination is guided by the “principle of setting something out for contemplation” (ÄII 328), it will continue to show itself in reason as the ability to adequately transform “abstract generality into a concrete totality of ideas, purposes, actions, and events” (ÄII 330).

3.2. *Where This Leaves Us*

The theory of art that section 2 lays out as the IP View, and its application is compatible with Pippin's Third Position interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of art. This accord stems from the fact that the Third Position explicitly embraces the epistemic-necessity thesis (in its claim that art continues to be a vital mode of orientation of self-consciousness toward what constitutes robust knowledge) and could be shown to embrace the autonomy-of-art thesis, as the IP View does. While the Third Position rejects Hegel's end-of-art thesis, it does so by dismissing it as a "lack of imagination" about how and why art might continue to remain necessary for robust knowledge. In light of the evidence discussed above, it is not clear that the Third Position would want to maintain its claim about Hegel's failure to imagine future forms and continued necessity of art. In any case, the Third Position's rejection of Hegel's end-of-art thesis is not necessary for the positive thesis of the Third Position, and it can presumably find accord with the IP View even if it continues to reject the IP View's basis for reinterpreting and embracing the end-of-art thesis. Thus, the IP View is compatible with the Third Position while offering a theoretical framework for making sense of Hegel's passages about the end of art without dismissing these passages as the Third Position does, ignoring them as the Second does, or misunderstanding them as the First Position does.⁵³

In sum, Hegel thinks that philosophy can no longer mean what it did historically in fundamental distinction from art. Instead, it now necessarily incorporates within itself the vitality of art and its necessity for attaining robust knowledge (among other necessary methods).⁵⁴ If this charitable reading of Hegel is right, then it is his view that to be true philosophy, to be the love of wisdom, philosophy must now see itself as fundamentally formed in part through art, where art is taken to be both an end in itself and necessary for attaining robust knowledge (again, among other internal methods). Philosophy on this view has sublated into its own method the method of art; this means that philosophy (so understood) has become something quite new, and hopefully more adequate to the pursuit of robust knowledge.

To give a full defense of this reading, I would need to say a lot more about Hegel's philosophy of *Geist* and his conception of sublation (*Aufhebung*) and the Idea. Here my sole purpose has been to say that there is a charitable reading of Hegel that allows us to embrace all three theses: acknowledging the controversial

⁵³I understand Houlgate to espouse an interpretation of Hegel's end-of-art passages similar to my own (*Arts*, xxii). For a contrasting account, see Hulatt's interpretation of Hegel and Danto as identifying the autonomous end of art qua "completion" of its vocation, which he contrasts with Adorno's "heteronomous" end of art ("Hegel, Danto, Adorno," 742). His interpretation of Danto and Hegel is common, but misguided. Against Hulatt, I suggest that we have no basis for reading Hegel (or Danto) as claiming that art "completes" its vocations. Rather, the essence of the thesis is that we recognize that although art is necessary to robust knowledge, it is not sufficient. Art must instead become a dialectical part of a broader formative method by which robust knowledge emerges. This is the sublation of art into a higher, more robust method of self-conscious life (which retains art within it). On this point, I think Danto gets the essence of Hegel's end-of-art thesis (*End of Art*, 30–31), though Danto would perhaps have done better to phrase his own post-manifesto conception of art in less contentious terms (*End of Art*, 34); this is to say nothing of Danto's account of what is entailed by this "end of art," which invites further controversy and diverges from my own view.

⁵⁴For a contemporary defense of the role of the arts (specifically literature) in philosophy, see Eldridge, "Introduction," 3–18.

end-of-art passages while also seeing them as a reasonable and meaningful result of a compelling theory of art as both an end in itself and necessary for robust knowledge, therein implying a reformation of how philosophy should be understood. This charitable reading is facilitated by the IP View, a view that Hegel seems to support, and which helps make sense of those notorious passages on the end of art.

In short, the IP View offers a plausible theory of art in its own right and also yields a charitable framework by which to understand three fundamental yet seemingly antithetical claims in Hegel's philosophy of art. On this view, art is both an end in itself and necessary for robust knowledge. Moreover, if this is what Hegel had in mind, then it facilitates greater appreciation of his account of why art matters for robust knowledge. The necessity of art for robust knowledge stems from its status as an internally purposive end in itself. That is, (iii) the epistemic necessity thesis depends on engagement with art according to (ii) the autonomy thesis. To treat it as a mere means to knowledge is to fail to engage it as art and so to miss the unique mode by which it does contribute meaningfully to robust knowledge. At the same time, the IP View rejects the elevation of art to the status of a sufficient means of robust knowledge (hence the pastness claims about art's self-sufficiency for robust knowledge). The latter "sufficiency view" is one that can be reasonably ascribed (whether rightly or wrongly) to some of the German Romantics, in particular the Schlegel brothers, who held soaring views of art's role in yielding robust knowledge and in the formation of self-consciousness.⁵⁵ It is something like the latter conception of art that Hegel has in view when speaking of its pastness as an independently self-sufficient mode that is adequate to robust knowledge. Art is not sufficient for robust knowledge, and to treat it as such is, for us, a thing of the past.⁵⁶

⁵⁵I am not suggesting that this is the only or best reading of the Schlegel brothers or of others such as Schelling and Novalis, but this view is regularly attributed to them, and for good reason. See, for example, Beiser's excellent account of the "sovereignty of art" for the early German Romantics, which picks out art's ability to yield something of the "holism" characteristic of *Bildung* (where *Bildung* is a conception of formation that entails a holistic understanding of life as the "highest good") (*Imperative*, 27). As a result, for some of these thinkers, because "art alone has the power to fathom the absolute, it is superior to philosophy, which now becomes the mere handmaiden of art" (*Imperative*, 73). Compare this with Frank's account of Friedrich Schlegel, on which Schlegel retains a meaningful distinction between philosophy and art, and yet because of Schlegel's antifoundationalism, art plays the highest role in the formation of knowledge and, more importantly, of *Bildung* (*Foundations*, 191–200; cf. Nassar, *Absolute*, 90–92). Like Nassar, I think that Beiser and Frank both mistakenly take Hegel to reduce Romanticism to a "poetic exaggeration of Fichtean idealism," though it is not clear to me how Nassar reads Hegel on this score (*Absolute*, 10). Many defenders of early German Romantics, such as Judith Norman ("Romanticism," 311, 331), read Hegel as "hating" the Romantics. However, I submit that it is the inexactitude and overreaching claims by the Schlegel brothers in particular that Hegel takes to be unjustifiable and philosophically indefensible (see *AI* 289). This is not a strike against the core of Romanticism by Hegel's lights, but against their particular articulations of it. In the end-of-art thesis, his critique is of an overascription to art that obfuscates the actual absolute worth of art, not of the fundamental Romantic conception of art's centrality to *Bildung* or holistic/robust knowledge. The latter he shares with the Romantics, and here he was heavily influenced by both Goethe (see Gentry, "Artworks as Living Wholes") as well as Schiller and Hölderlin; cf. Förster, *Twenty-Five Years*, 362; Haag "Intuiting," 161; Henrich, *Hegel im Kontext*, 39).

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