HEGEL'S AESTHETICS AND CONTEMPORARY ART: HOME, VAGABONDAGE AND (W)HOLE

by © Dylan Delikta,

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ABSTRACT

What is the condition that situates the ongoing transformations of contemporary art? What insights about the meaning of selfhood and our worlds might we find by exploring it? Through a close reading of *Hegel's Aesthetics,* in which Hegel offers a phenomenological study of art's development, my thesis posits an interpretation of contemporary art's situation as the play between the human experiences of *at-homeness* and *vagabondage* in the world, which I name *being-in-the-(w)hole*. My reading of Hegel suggests that he points toward this experience of the (w)hole—art's infinite determinability in expression and meaning—and how contemporary art can express this play as a site for the co-experiencing and co-defining of the meaning of self and world. By thematizing this play, I argue that the condition that situates contemporary art is that of dynamic equality, an equality in which all are recognized as able to interpret a shared object together.

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Introduction: Art as a Manifestation of our Co-experience of Political Life

Art, according to Hegel's interpretation, is a liberator, because it has the power to free from captivity "the true content of phenomena from the pure appearance and deception of this bad, transitory world, and gives them a higher actuality, born of the spirit [i.e., subjectivity]" (*Aesthetics I*, 9). [1] That is, art lifts its objects, feelings, themes, and so on, from our everyday experiences of them into creative shapes that reveal themselves as significant to understanding who *we* are. Whatever image or form art takes, its ability as art is to manifest itself as that which "points through and beyond itself," hinting at "something spiritual of which it is to give us an idea" (ibid.). Art shakes loose what is ordinarily considered as part of the background of experience to show that these objects provide the possibility of experiencing what is "spiritual" or significant about human experience. By appropriating everyday objects—by lifting what we consider the mundane into what is significant—art reveals our transformative potential to reevaluate our understandings of ourselves and our world. Art strips its objects of their "inflexible foreignness" (I:31) to provide a possible occasion for us to notice how our understandings of ourselves and our world are disclosed in and through it. The object's liberation from the everyday by art thereby allows us to recognize the mutual shaping that occurs between us and the worlds in which we live; that is, an artwork makes it possible for us to identify *who* we are and *what* kind of world we live in, disclosing the possibility

[1] G.W. F. Hegel's *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), I:9. From this point on, I will indicate the volume and page number in parentheses in the body of the text.

to discover newer and more comprehensive understandings of what it means to be human.

This thesis reflects the belief that Hegel's descriptions of art carry something deeply revolutionary and speak to such world-changing developments of political life. That is, because art says something about who "we" are, and who "we" are develops throughout history, we can (along with Hegel) identify substantial developments of political experience by turning to a culture's artworks. For instance, "classical art," as posited by Hegel, goes hand-in-hand with the political development of Greek ethical life, or rather, what I argue to be the experience of *being-at-home*. As Hegel argues, "the Greeks in their immediate real existence lived in the happy milieu of both self-conscious subjective freedom and the ethical substance," meaning that Greek political and religious values could be immanently seen in each individual citizen just as much as each citizen, through the performance of some action within the city-state, recognized his freedom as actual because it bears witness to the "universal aims of the whole" (I:436-7). Hegel posits this "happy" identification between the Greek citizen and his city-state because of their sculptures, which present the divine as something disclosed through the sculpting of the human form. However, what is sculpted is not the individual Greek citizen's daily life; rather, what is brought to life in sculpture is what is "objective" or "eternal" to the Greeks understanding of themselves and their world. It is in this way that sculpture and classical art relate to Greek ethical life—the being-at-home of the Greek citizen—for the way this world was structured encouraged citizens to feel a connection with their home and affirm that connection to the extent that their actions and speech reflected the enduring, excellent aspects of that home. It is therefore not the citizen's inner subjective

life that concerns this being-at-home (it does not concern our ability to lounge on a couch and devour snacks). Rather, this being-at-home is characterized by a feeling of belonging to a magnificent city-state, where we the Greeks do amazing things.

In romantic art, conversely, Hegel describes how Christianity's influence on the European world leads us to the recognition of individual right, and such individuality can be found in arts of that historical situation. As Hegel states, individuality "has become affirmative in and for itself," and having sprung-forth into the world, "emerges freely as subject with the demand that, as subject in its infinity … it shall secure complete reverence for itself and others" (I:553). In other words, who "we" are, in terms of Hegel's posited description of romantic art, is a people that recognize each individual as having the capacity to make manifest what is significant through their own efforts. Thus, accompanying and reflected in the development of romantic art is the political development of *one's own* right, a development that arises from and constantly challenges the ethical substances (our "political homes," so to speak) of which one is part. By challenging one's home, one either asserts one's complete rightness in one's course of action (leading to one's downfall) or struggles to bring one's voice out into the world due to a lack of substance in that world. Romantic art is, therefore, fundamentally characterized by a division between the individual and its environment, or rather, gives expression to this division, thematizing the inadequacy of the external world in which subjectivity finds itself—one's home is no longer enough to capture who one is and how one lives in this world. Thus, as I will show, romantic art reveals subjectivity as that which has *wandered* away from its home, thus revealing the political development of *vagabondage.* I use vagabondage deliberately to indicate two things: the first being the

sense of homelessness that infinite subjectivity has by being always already beyond every finite mark that points toward it. The word "vagabond" is derived from the Latin *vagabundus* which means "wandering" and "vagrancy," hence its meaning "one who has wandered away from the boundaries of home." Second, I use it to indicate that one always has a previous bond from which one wanders, in the sense that one is always already caught up in a particular way of seeing even though one's power as a subjectivity leads one venture out. A vagabond is therefore not necessarily one who is homeless; rather, it is one who is bound to a home but always wanders away from it. Through the romantic arts of painting, music, and poetry, subjectivity continuously makes itself known to itself, asserting its right to make its mark and move beyond it, to "make present" both its limited perspective and the infinite depths of its feelings, thoughts, struggles, and so forth upon it.

Following Hegel's descriptions of the development of art, what can we determine to be the parallel political development found within our own world—the world of contemporary art? What is the political condition that our artworks find themselves implicitly validating regardless of the specific content the artwork expresses? The answer to this question is complicated. For Hegel, romantic art marks the point where art has in a sense transcended its proper form or ideal and yet maintains itself through its task "to set forth in an adequate sensuous present what is itself inherently rich in content" (I:611). That is, Hegel posits that art, on the one hand, rounds itself off—is made determinate—in and through the development of particular manifestations of art (such as "classical" and "romantic" art) and the individual manifestations of its works, and yet, on the other hand, reveals itself as an infinite, ongoing commitment to presenting new, determinate forms of

human experience in which we are engaged. I believe this continuous play of determinacy and infinitude to which Hegel's descriptions of the last stage of romantic art attests is the situation in which contemporary art is made. As such, the political condition of contemporary art is much like that of the political condition of romantic art: the development of one's own right as well as the search for a home that adequately recognizes the subjectivity's infinite powers of expression.

However, as I shall show, while the political condition of contemporary art recognizes the importance of the development of rights in regards to subjectivity, it does not take subjectivity as sacrosanct. Rather than holding "home" or "vagabondage"—the objectivity of ethical substance or subjectivity of human rights—as what is absolute, I argue that contemporary art and the political condition from which it arises reveals the significant to be the relation and continuous play between the human conditions of home and vagabondage. By neither accepting one nor the other absolutely, contemporary art is in a position to present its works as singular expressions of subjectivity that reveal both determinate and infinite interpretations about our homes and wanderings away from them. In other words, these works can potentially reveal facets about who we are and what kind of worlds we occupy, allowing us the possibility to enjoy both the infinitude of our inner life and the specificity of our relation to others and the world. No longer is there an "absolute" that manifests itself as a completely substantial content in art that appears other than human, nor a material that expresses its content with complete adequacy given the vastness of our inner, infinite subjectivity. These artworks reveal themselves as perspectives of a beyond that can only be made present in and through a singular,

determinate expression of it.[2] Prometheus has succeeded in passing the fire of the gods to humanity; in other words, art now proclaims, as Hegel says, "*Humanus*" as the "holiest of holies," and with this infinity of depth is an infinity of expression that allows art to represent "everything in which man as such is capable at being at home" (I:607). Whatever the content of an artwork expresses today, it can never completely plumb the depths of the human heart and put before us something that attests to an absolute home for humanity. As art scholar William I. Fowkes brilliantly summarizes in his study on Hegel's *Aesthetics*, "if there is a 'moral' to the Hegelian story of art, it is that you can't go home again."[3] Nothing in art's past can become a permanent home for us—there is a *hole* present within every *whole* we bring to light.

While some might argue that this loss of *an* "absolute" that provides a "proper" measure of art rings its death knell, I believe that this lack of proper form is what makes contemporary art compelling. Indeed, what I argue in this thesis is that, for Hegel, this lack that is made present owing to the infinitude of our subjectivity and modes of expression is what allows *all of us* access to aesthetic experience, individually and together. That is, art today does not attempt to "re-create" itself or seek a new measure in which it can attain complete beauty. Rather, it leaves it *up to all of us* to gather together singular perspectives of an artwork and provide an adequate interpretation of the work's meaning. Contemporary art offers us the possibility of perceiving a situation of cooperative discovery, or rather, the recognizing of our ongoing practice of co-experiencing and co-defining meaning. What is substantial in contemporary artworks is

[2] This will be made clearer in Chapter Three, especially in section two where I interpret specific works of the artists Lygia Clark and Fred Wilson.
[3] William I. Fowkes, *A Hegelian Account of Contemporary Art* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981), 88-9.

not *in* the work, but rather *between* the subjectivities who potentially come to interpret what the work shows us as a way of understanding ourselves and our world. Contemporary artworks invite all of us to participate in defining this work before us, and as such, have the potential to both let us recognize the homes from which our perspectives are built and allow us to wander away from them to encounter the homes of others. It is through this practice that we are able to attain a *(w)hole* picture of the present, not only in our creations and studies of art but also in ways in which we approach political life. [4] Because of art's openness to indefinite interpretation of its expression and call for the co-definition of its meaning, what I argue to be the political development implicit in contemporary art is the recognition of an equality that continuously interrupts our being-at-homeness by allowing us to recognize that other homes exist. This equality is therefore a dynamic "basis" (in a loose sense of the term) that calls upon all of us to constantly renew and re-interpret how we understand ourselves and the worlds in which we live.

This argument about the recognition of the human condition of dynamic equality that can be found in contemporary art is akin to what artist Luis Jacob considers the "groundless" experiencing of art, which he describes as such: "from the viewpoint from Life as I live it, the meaning of these facts of my situation and of my having taken this

[4] This practice is recognized by contemporary artists themselves. For example, as the poet Walt Whitman astutely remarks in "A Backwards Glance O'er Travel'd Roads," the arts "grow of circumstances, and are evolutionary" [Walt Whitman, "A Backwards Glance…," *Leaves of Grass*: 1892 Edition, (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 446]. Developing on this thought, he later adds: "If I had not stood before [the old poems of Europe] with uncover'd head, fully aware of their colossal grandeur and beauty of form and spirit, I could not have written *Leaves of Grass*… [Just] as America fully and fairly construed is the legitimate result and evolutionary outcome of the past, so I would dare to claim for my verse" (Whitman, *Leaves,* 449) As he concludes, this evolution from past art to one of the present and future is that attests to "realities and science and of the democratic average and basic equality" (*ibid.*), which we could only make present by turning toward the living human being and its realities.

path instead of another—the significance of these things is never written in stone, and never ceases to be an open question."[5] Contemporary art "makes present" this groundlessness by creating works that invite open questioning, taking what is most contingent about the objective and finite "internal" concerns of our particular worlds and configuring them in ways that shake up our everyday experiencing of them. It makes available to *all* eyes that what is significant lies beyond the singular works of art put before us, and shows that the things in which one member of one particular world finds oneself at home in is always already interpreted differently by another's perspective of it. We are forced, through the contemporary situation of art, to recognize that the meaning of a work can stabilize but can never fully ossify: what we take for granted as completely determinate is always open to interpretation by all, and that all are thus implicitly equal because they too have a stake in defining the meanings of self and world in this shared situation. Dynamic equality thus understood is not a concept or a specific political reality, but a supplement[6]—an additive term used to signify the groundless play between determination and infinitude (home and vagabondage)—that unveils a constant call for all of us to disrupt received understandings of ourselves and our relation to others and the world in which we live by thinking these understandings differently. We gain access to this phenomenon partly through our comprehension of aesthetic experience, for this "groundlessness" is experienced through the break that exists from the lack of proper form that Hegel describes as the condition of art for us now. Indeed, it is through

[5] Luis Jacob, "Groundless in the Museum: Anarchism and the Living Work of Art,", *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, no.2 (January 2011): 93

[6] For a discussion of "supplement" and the "movement of the supplementary," see Jacques Derrida "Structure, Sign, and Play" in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978).

aesthetic experience that we recognize our being as, what I call, "being-in-the-(w)hole," an experience of our sense of home within the particular wholes that form our perspective and the experience of the holes that reveal the beyond of such homes, i.e., our groundlessness as subjectivities.

What I aim to do in this thesis is explore how the experience of being-in-the-(w)hole can be found in and through contemporary art by carefully exploring Hegel's descriptions of classical and romantic art, the political contexts in which such art was made, and how these descriptions give us possible insights into the background in which contemporary art arises. By working through Hegel's descriptions, I will both show how art allows us to perceive our ongoing and transformative understandings of self and world, and how contemporary art plays within these transformations to reveal the (w)holes through which we recognize both our indebtedness to a home and what exists outside that home. In Chapter One, I discuss the terms and methodology that Hegel posits as required by a philosophical approach to art. Within this discussion, I turn to his descriptions of classical art and sculpture in order to reveal the development of "being-at-home," which I posit as an interpretation of Hegel's descriptions of the proper form of classical art and the "objective spirit" of sculpture. In Chapter Two, I discuss the development of inner subjective life as operative in Hegel's descriptions of romantic art. There, I turn to Hegel's descriptions of painting and dramatic poetry to reveal the development of subjectivity's "vagabondage," and how it's wandering away from home allows it to assert for itself its own rights. Art, however, as much as any other domain of meaning in which human beings are reflecting on themselves and the meaning of the world around them, carries with it an impulse to critical reflection and therefore insight

into the inadequacies of its present. In the context of the development of romantic art, we see that as subjectivity wanders farther away from its home, it comes to learn that it must communicate with other subjectivities who also assert a claim about what it means to be a self in the world. As such, subjectivity enters into conflict (both internally and with others), learning through its struggle that its sense of individuality could only be developed through others—others with whom it shares a home. Therefore, subjectivity must make room for the other's capacity to experience and define the realities of ourselves and world in which we live. Chapter Three is thus a discussion of how contemporary art presents itself as a possible site in which our understandings of home and vagabondage become contested, thereby revealing how the meanings of self and world are always already co-defined. That is, through Hegel's descriptions of art, we are better able to approach contemporary art because of the ways such art plays with our ongoing attempts at understanding what "home" means. In it, I will discuss how Hegel's descriptions reveal the need for artist and spectator to accept the lack of a proper form for art to discover how this experience is a liberation and what sort of responsibilities this entails. By learning how it is that we are in the (w)hole together through the aesthetic experience of contemporary art, we learn how to better take account of our political realities and ask if they adequately "make present" this ongoing commitment to equality.

Chapter One: Hegel's Definition of Art and the Development of Being-at-Home through Classical Art

1.1 Hegel, Art, and Aesthetic Experience

Before embarking upon a discussion of Hegel's descriptions of art and how such insights open up interesting perspectives of contemporary art, I will first describe what Hegel means by "art," how it is that art belongs to the "realm of absolute spirit" (I:94), and his phenomenological account of aesthetics. After that explication, I will discuss how Hegel's interprets classical art as the cultural accomplishment of "being-at-home," in which the Greeks establish a shared experience of creating and maintaining a particular place through democratic participation in the city-state. As such, the Greeks do not define themselves as separate individuals—on the contrary, they express themselves in terms that signify their belonging and participation in a specific home (e.g., as "citizens"). I will then turn to Hegel's description of sculpture to show how this individual art "harmoniously" integrates the content of classical art (being-at-home) and the form ("purified" human body), thus appearing as the work of a culture who has won for themselves a home and that gives each member a divine and dignified perspective of their citizenship.

For Hegel, an object can be described as art if it has these three qualities: first, "a content, an aim, a meaning"; second, "the expression, appearance, and realization of this content"; and third, that this content and expression "are so penetrated by one another that the external, the particular, appears exclusively as a presentation of the inner" (I:95).

In other words, an object is considered an artwork if what appears in and through the entirety of its shape is an expression of "the inner," otherwise referred to as "spirit" or the power of human subjectivity. In this sense, Hegel describes, a work of art is a making which turns "every one of its productions into a thousand-eyed Argus" (I:153): in and through each and every color, line, shape, action, and so on, appears a meaning that reveals an aspect of the artwork's content, quite like how we can generally read a person's feeling by looking in her eyes. Indeed, it is never the artwork itself as a mere object that is the focus of Hegel's description of art; rather, it is the "soul" that rests inside the artwork's many eyes to which he attempts to give voice. Yet, we cannot merely throw away the external realities of art—it is only through these particular expressions (this eye) that inner life manifests itself before us. Therefore, we cannot approach art merely from the side of its content or its form; rather, we must approach art by concerning ourselves with how its two sides reveal in and through it something significant about inner life.

As such, Hegel posits that "art's vocation is to unveil the *truth* in the form of sensuous artistic configuration, to set forth the reconciled opposition [between theory or subjective thinking and objective existence and experience], and so to have its end and aim in itself, in this very setting forth and unveiling" (I:55). What Hegel means by "truth" is that which emerges as the linking of the pieces of "finite existence" that are "driven asunder" in this finitude, but are actually essentially linked (I:100). This emergent link is recognized by transforming our experiencing of these "separate" pieces into the object of our experience: to recognize that our perspective is always already a perspective of the

world.[7] Art, because it belongs to this "realm of absolute spirit," is the activity of creation that puts before our eyes the reconciliation of inner life and outer existence as an individual configuration or "pure appearance" of what is essentially true—appearance or experience itself. Art therefore has the capacity to "liberate the true content of phenomena from the pure appearance and deception" of our finite world by making this content an object of imaginative reflection, allowing this object to "point through and beyond itself"—to let immediate[8] experience disclose "the real and the true"— and challenge our received ways of experiencing the world in which we live (I:9). To encounter the strangeness of art and the way it lets experience itself unfold before our eyes is our first witnessing of the power of subjectivity.

In order to better understand what art is, Hegel identifies three aspects of art to help us distinguish what counts as art-phenomena. First, that "the content which is to come into artistic representation should be in itself qualified for such representation" (I:70). That is, whatever the content might be, it ought to be something that is adequately expressed through the form in which it is contained. It is neither the case that we should approach the artwork with a predetermined idea of what it is or reveals, nor should we

[7] On the transformation of the act of experiencing into the object of our experience, see John Russon "Phenomenological Description and Artistic Expression," in *Phenomenology and the Arts*, ed. Licia Carlson and Peter Costello (Lanham: Lexington Books 2016), 3-5. In his discussion of the difference between introspective and phenomenological description, he makes an introspective description on what he is actively seeing when reading his book in a café located in Toronto, then transforms this experience by describing what he sees by seeing his book in the café in Toronto, which is the form his experience takes. What changes, Russon explains, is "what I notice *in* what I am seeing, what is the figure and what background in the experience. In my experience, "what appears" is things, locations, space, being and, ultimately, experiencing—appearing—itself" (Russon, "Phenomenological Description," 4). This "noticing *in* what I am seeing" is what I believe Hegel to be getting at in his understanding of "truth."

[8] By "immediate," I am referring Hegel's description of sense experience and the "deception" of experiencing the mere "phenomena of the external world" and our singular "inner world of sense" (I:8). For Hegel, the "empirical inner and out world" is not what is truly actual, for what is actual is the relation (spirit) of phenomena and powers of subjectivity to apprehend it. Art is thus both an immediate experience, in the sense that we encounter an artwork as an external object and "feel" something through it, and an experience of our limitless powers of subjectivity. See *Aesthetics I*, 8-12.

assume that art must depict only the "beauty" of nature. On the contrary, art has to do with our "need to lift the inner and outer world" into our thinking of the world, and is thus the "duplication" of our perspective of ourselves and the world as an "object" that can be viewed and recognized as such (I:31). This leads to the second aspect of art-phenomena, that the content be "concrete," not in the sense that it is simply there in external reality, but that it has "essentiality or universality, and particularization, together with their reconciled unity [individual configuration]" (I:70). It is not enough that an artwork contains some message, has such and such a display of feeling, or some sort of depiction that we might more or less enjoy depending on certain tastes. Rather, the artwork's content, by being something that can be expressed in and through a sensuous object, ought to be both that which concerns itself with a particular, distinct world *and* with the universal—or significant—ways human beings experience the world as human. The work of art is therefore not something for mere "sensuous apprehension," whether it be that of mere desire or mere intellectualism; rather, as Hegel says, "its standing is of such a kind that, though sensuous, it is essentially at the same time for spiritual apprehension; the spirit is meant to be affected by it and to find some satisfaction in it" (I:35). The content, therefore, must be something that can be experienced when we are experiencing the form—not a detached meaning floating elsewhere. The last of these aspects is that the form and shape a content corresponds to "must likewise be something individual, in itself completely concrete and single" (I:71). That is, the form in which content resides must be an adequate, sensuous apparatus in and through which the content is able to make itself noticed. Whatever individual form the artwork is displayed as must be capable of both being something external and of having "the purpose of existing solely

for our mind and spirit" (ibid.).[9] It is through these individual configurations that the content is able to be expressed as the unity of both its particularity and universality.

Having understood these qualifications, we are in a position to encounter art with Hegel in a philosophical way. That is, we ought to see through an artwork's objective configuration the ways in which subjectivity has been given a particular form (i.e., "objective spirit"), hints at a meaning "above" or beyond its particularity (i.e., universal, "absolute spirit"), and the infinite ways in which art leads us to think of the play between these conditions of subjective human experience. This is what Hegel means when he posits the "idea of the beauty of art" (I:73). Beauty for him is a content (the play of particularity and universality) that is put before us as an individual configuration that can adequately reveal it. An artwork which completely integrates this meaning into adequate shape is what Hegel posits as an "ideal" artwork. This artwork does not point to something that is merely beyond itself, but rather reveals itself as the experience of the appearance of meaning—here, as the work of free, creative humanity.[10] As Hegel describes, "the ideal artwork confronts us like a blessed god" (I:157); it reveals itself as the tranquil accomplishment of our collective efforts to establish meaning for our shared

[9] These configurations take the form of architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry. This not to say that other forms of art (e.g.- dancing, pottery, carpentry, gardening, and so on) are "lesser than" in terms of their capability of being art works. Rather, for Hegel, it is the case that these arts "cannot hold fast to the essential differences grounded in [art] itself" and therefore make it difficult to attend to the phenomenon of art (II:627). In other words, these arts tend to confront us in their everydayness rather than as works of art, thus turning us toward more circumstantial detail rather than allowing us to approach art itself. For more detail, see 627-628 in *Aesthetics II*.

[10] Hegel scholar Terry Pinkard suggests that we think of Hegel's concept of "the Ideal" as an "embodied norm" [Terry Pinkard, "Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic Art" in *Hegel and the Arts*, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 11]. As he argues, "to say therefore that art strives after the 'Ideal' is… to say that it strives for a kind of embodied norm, a kind of singular sensuous presentation in the form of beauty of what it means to be a 'minded,' *geistig*, spiritual agent in its most exemplary form. Art does not seek to formulate universal principles (as philosophy does) but rather to display such norms in singular works of beauty" (*ibid.*). An "ideal" artwork is therefore one that is interpreted to fully embody spiritual freedom in its shape.

home. In this way, art needs to be both "of its time" and timeless: "of its time" in the sense that the artwork must appear as something that speaks to and of the people and historical situation in which it has been created, and yet timeless in the sense that it is made with the faith that others beyond its time will also recognize its significance. As Hegel notes, "the work of art is not so naively self-centered; it is essentially a question, an address to the responsive breast, a call to the mind and the spirit" (I:71). The ways art integrates meaning and shape changes depending upon the particular situation in which it was made manifest, and yet must remain a question that all are called to address.

By recognizing art's ever-changing particularity, both the meanings present in an artwork and the forms in and through which they are presented are subject to historical development. Hegel's interpretation of art follows a certain trajectory; art neither begins as the complete integration of meaning and shape, nor does this posited, perfect correspondence remain what art takes as significant and worthy of expression. Hegel thus argues that art's development consists "in the striving for, the attainment, and the transcendence of the ideal as the true idea of beauty" (I:81). We must become familiar with these different configurations of meaning and shape in order to not only appreciate past artworks, but also to develop a responsible attitude to the art of today both in our creation and judgment of it. When we consider the specific developments found in what Hegel names symbolic, classical, and romantic art (the particular art forms parallel to the developments Hegel notes (I:81)), we must recognize how each accomplishment indicates something significant (or, as Hegel will also say, "divine") about *human* experience. As we continue forward with Hegel's interpretation of art, it is pertinent that

we recognize that each moment of art (even today) reveals what is significantly human. It is this that art strives, attains, and transcends in its historical development.

1.2 Classical Art as the "Centre": Greek Life and the Accomplishment of Being-at-Home

The "ideal attainment" of art's significant power—by which he means the perfect adequacy between content and form—is posited by Hegel as having occurred in the Ancient Greek world. In order to grasp why Hegel interprets the art of the Greeks as "classical" and "ideal," we need to familiarize ourselves with Hegel's interpretation of how the Greeks developed the world in which they lived through their art. Therefore, we must briefly discuss the art-world from whence the Greeks arose (i.e., symbolic art), and then establish what it is about their world that allowed art to attain its significant power. From this we shall see just how classical art can be interpreted as the accomplishment of "being-at-home."

For Hegel, Ancient Greek civilization is characterized as having an air of blissfulness, as these free people harmoniously lived in a reality in and through which their freedom[11] is adequately and immanently reflected, i.e., the state. As Hegel states:

> The Greeks in their immediate real existence lived in the *happy* milieu of both self-conscious subjective freedom and the ethical substance.... [I]n Greek ethical life the individual was independent and free in himself, though without cutting himself adrift from the universal interests present in the actual state and from the affirmative immanence of spiritual freedom in the temporal present. The universal element in ethical, and the *abstract* freedom of the person in his inner and outer life, remain, in

[11] This freedom is only a partial accomplishment: women were not allowed to participate in the decision-making of the Greek city-states, and such city-states also allowed for the practice of slavery.

> conformity with the principle of Greek life, in undisturbed harmony with one another... The substance of political life was merged in individuals just as much as they sought this their own freedom only in pursuing the universal aims of the whole (I:436-7)

What Hegel is trying to convey is how the Greeks lived in such a way that individuals, as free creative beings, immediately identified themselves with the political and religious institutions that they experienced as the objective accomplishment of the freedom of all. The celebrated freedom of the Greeks is one that does not get caught up in the worries and distress of inward subjective life; rather, it is a freedom of participation—of belonging—and therefore an accomplishment made on *our* behalf, sustained by the richness of the world that situates us. The Greeks live as if what is of ultimate significance has been completely determined "here" in what they accomplish together; their "happiness" being the result of the feeling of certainty that their customs, traditions, expressions, actions, etc., are the work of the gods. Thus, the Greeks can be said to focus on the present: the "divine" (what is significant)[12] is made real here on earth through the community. If this harmony is to be maintained, then what must be present is the individual as citizen who immediately reveals Greek values through his actions and works within the community and the world around him.

However, such an accomplishment does not come from nowhere; rather, it bursts forth from a struggle that sought to express the meaning of reality in a way that was adequate to that meaning. Therefore, in order for the classical art of the Greek world to

[12] I follow Robert B. Pippin's interpretation on Hegel's use of the term "divine," in which what is being expressed is not God or the gods themselves as divine beings, but rather what is significant about the human experience. As he shows in his essay "What was Abstract Art?," if Hegel considers art to be "a vehicle for the self-education of human being about itself" and "calls that dimension of aesthetic meaning divine," then it seems to be the case that what is meant by divine is something that "[flatters] the seriousness and finality of the [aesthetic] enterprise… than in any sense worrying about the God of revealed religion" [Robert B. Pippin, "What was Abstract Art? (From the Point of View of Hegel)" in *Hegel and the Arts*, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 250].

reveal itself as the complete correspondence of content and form, art must begin in a way that struggles with content and form itself. Such is what Hegel describes as symbolic art: the "mere search for portrayal than a capacity for true presentation" (I:76). This art, which clears the way for classical art's accomplishments, entices us to *wonder* about its forms and ask about the content toward that which its form points; the content is presented as mysterious. As such, the content and form of symbolic art remain abstract from one another. Its content is "sublime," meaning that its content appears as always beyond its form, for it has not found "in the sphere of phenomena an object which proves adequate" for its representation (I:363). The forms of this sphere reveal themselves as mere finite shapes: they begin as natural objects and then develop into comparative expressions that posit natural objects as attributes or supplements to a power beyond themselves.[13] As the separation of content and form progresses through these stages of symbolic art, what is worked out in art is that these two sides can be united. That is, the relation between abstract meaning and shape is "brought about by subjective activity, between inner feelings, intuitions, and their cognate configurations" (I:421). In other words, the Greeks conceive themselves as capable of articulating the nature of the divine, no longer pointing to it as a mysterious beyond. What the Greeks and their art reflect is thus the reconciliation of content and form that is made possible by subjective *human* activity that now recognizes the existence of the significant as revealed through its free, creative actions in the world. This, however, occurred on the base of the struggle and creations of previous civilizations.

[13] For example, a lion used as a symbolic reference for courage, bravery, authority, and so on, thus the reason King Richard was also called Richard the Lionheart.

The recognition of the content of art as subjective human activity—or rather, the accomplishment of shared human existence—calls for a shape that can reveals it best. Hegel identifies this shape as the human form. As he explains, "the external human form is alone capable of revealing the spiritual in a sensuous way," for it is the "bodily presence which in itself mirrors the spirit" (I:433). What classical art expresses is the idea that the divine—the significant—is manifested here in the world, and the shape that is most obviously spirit is the human being. Such is why Hegel states that the human form "in its whole demeanor evinces itself as the dwelling-place of spirit and indeed as the sole possible existence of spirit in nature" (I:434). It is through the imagined perfection of the human body as expressed in Greek sculpture that is posited to be the best reflection of spiritual power.[14] This integration of the subjective power of humanity and its objective human form is a result of the "self-determination" of Greek peoples who have created a world (i.e., the state, art, and religion) that reveals humanity as "what is absolutely true, free, and independent, displaying in its existence nothing but itself" (I:431). By creating this recognizably and significantly human world, the Greeks win for themselves a home where they can immediately identify their capacity to be creators and shapers of their own collective destiny. This immediacy permeates all their works as the feeling of happiness, satisfaction, and freedom that comes from the recognition of having the power to make the divine present upon the earth. There is a surety and confidence present in Classical art, and it shows through the immediacy of the significant that is the result of an

[14] As Stephen Houlgate explains, "it is spiritual freedom that expresses itself specifically in bodily posture and action. The Greek god is thus not a disembodied spirit, but a self-conscious individual *body*, and so takes on human form. The bodily form taken by the gods is, however, one that expresses nothing but *divine freedom*. It thus lacks the contingent blemishes which mark mortal human bodies, and is consequently idealized bodily form" (Stephen Houlgate, "Hegel and the "End" of Art," *The Owl of Minerva* 29, no. 1 (Fall 1997), 4).

artist whose creations are the result of a "free deed of a clear-headed man who equally *knows* what he wills and *can* accomplish what he wills" (I:438). The artist's clarity of content frees him from the struggle of figuring out what ought to shine through his creation, thus allowing him to focus upon what bodily human expressions best reveal it. With meaning set in stone, the activities and organizations that form the Greek world are sculpted into a bodily, human form that can disclose the divine character of human creative freedom.

In order for the human form to be harmoniously configured with the content of classical art, Hegel states that it "must be freed from every accident of external determinacy," thus revealing itself as a "flawless externality" that has been "purified and elevated into a free harmony with the universal forms of the human shape" (I:483). The human form cannot appear as just another natural object nor reveal the specific personality of the form: it must be generally shaped so to reveal the significant aspects of the artist's subject-matter (e.g., Greek mythology and religion). Classical art does not concern itself with expressing inner feeling, emotion, flaws, or thinking as such—that is, with what is irreducibly internal and individual. Its sole focus is to reveal what is true through its most immediate, adequate appearance; or, as Hegel elaborates, the "identification of the spiritual and natural which is adequate to the spirit and which does not rest in the neutralization of the two opposed sides but lifts the spiritual to the higher totality where it maintains itself in its opposite, posits the natural as ideal, and expresses itself in and on the natural" (I:432). Not only must form be generalized, the content must be able to appear as this purified shape. That is, the content must be particularized so to better reveal the divine aspects of the work as existing in the present. The content must

appear as *this* specific god—a concrete individuality—who not only appears as a "substantial individuality" that "rests secure on its own universality as on an eternal and clear foundation," but also has a determinate "character" that is infused with both a specific "natural power" and "ethical substance" that gives this god a limited sphere of activity (I:481-82). Thus, the gods are shaped as being serene and blissful, for although they specifically rule over a particular natural and spiritual sphere of activity, they must be seen also as gods who are also withdrawn and at peace with these spheres.[15] It is because of this concrete individuality that Hegel considers classical art the center of art: the significant powers of the human community appear as actually *here before us* as a god made manifest through our collective actions in the world in which we live.

The flawless externality—the loftiness and blissfulness found in the god's self-repose—of classical art can be interpreted as the accomplishment of being-at-home in the world. As Hegel writes, the gods being depicted must "appear as raised above their body… as if [it were] a superfluous appendage" so that any action they could make would be met without any struggle (I:484). The gods, through such a sense of loftiness, are presented as being so much at home in their bodies that they reveal the infinite *possibility* of accomplishing anything. Analogously, the particular domains of human activity are open to an infinite amount of potential actions that we, as subjective human beings, must reckon with and give due consideration. The self-repose of the gods, who stand aloft and gaze upon the finite realm in a serene, blissful, and beautiful manner,

[15] Another way of saying this would be something like Pinkard's description: "[T]he success of classical art has to do with the way it… [shows] what it would be like to be an agent with the capacity for free sense-making activities in such a way that the free individual would be a law unto himself. For such an individual to be *ideal* in Hegel's sense, the free subject must therefore be *self-sufficient*, since any external limit to his freedom would be at odds with what it means to be free" (Pinkard, "Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic Art," 14). Classical art is that which shows one being above the particular and yet at peace in it.

stand as the objectified realization of our being-at-home—the comfort and openness of being able to freely enact our powers within a given situation created through our shared efforts. The gods are shaped in a way that captures them at ease, neither remaining in any specific situation that would determine them too thoroughly, nor so detached from a situation to remain a universal, eternal power.[16] The human experience of being-at-home is quite like living as if we were these gods: we find comfort within our particular spheres in which our limitless capacity to act as a society is recognized so long as we acknowledge the specific sphere as a significant reality. This world of art makes being-at-home present by placing before us the ease and bliss with which these gods stand within their domains, and in turn shows us substantive ways of attending to our particular situations and confirms for us the things we have done and are doing. As we shall see below, classical sculpture is the particular art that is best suited to revealing the attitude of being-at-home because its shape wholly embodies this sense of collective self-determination. We must turn to Hegel's description of sculpture in order to truly grasp how it best reveals the accomplishment of being-at-home.

1.3 Sculpture as the Center of Classical Art: The Embodiment of Being-at-Home

Greek sculpture, according to Hegel, brings together what is objective (body) and subjectivity "before our vision as one and the same indivisible whole" (II:702). The

[16] As Stephen Houlgate eloquently describes, the sculptures of the Greek gods and heroes are "free spirits at home in, and utterly content with, their bodies… They are tranquil spirits that have, as it were, been willingly poured out into their bodies and who now stand there, commandingly beautiful in the equanimity and repose" (Stephen Houlgate, "Hegel on the Beauty of Classical Sculpture" in *Hegel and the Arts*, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 58).

principle of sculpture, as Hegel argues, "comprises the miracle of spirit's giving itself an image of itself in something purely material" (II:710). At first, this passage seems dense: what does "spirit giving itself an image of itself" really mean? But when we consider Hegel's definition of spirit in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the "I that is We, and the We that is I,"[17] what is revealed is something quite lucid. Spirit as the "I that is We" is the shared cultural reality that always operates as one's situation; it is the language, customs, religion, laws, and views that make up the background from which, as a human being, one grows. Spirit as the "We that is I" is this particular reality expressed through the individuals who develop their powers from it; it is the eyes through which one gains a perspective upon the world. Thus, when Hegel says that spirit gives itself an image of itself, what is being expressed is that a culture (through its artists) creates for itself objective forms in and through which it is able to identify its powers of both belonging to a situation with others and its capacity to freely create and develop these objects through its participation within that situation. Thus, the sculptor as artist reveals both the particular character of his community and her the community-supported human capacity to make this present in and through his artwork. Indeed, this is what it means when Hegel says that, in classical art, the shape of the sculpture and the meaning that pervades it are perfectly harmonious. What is universal, what is significant about our various human experiences, is revealed through an object that is perfect and intrinsically meaningful form, the human body. The Greeks interpreted their actions as answering to the demands of the gods, and sculpture reveals this unity between individual and the divine through the immortalization of individuals in their divine perfection. The blissfulness of these

[17] See G.W.F Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Miller, A.V. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 110, §177

divine individuals is an objectification of the ways we, as those who belong to a specific community, make and maintain our home through our singular participation within it.

Sculpture has as its content the "objectivity of spirit in its self-repose" (II:710). What this means is that the individual, carved out of the particular material, is not revealing a sense of self that is occupied with its finite inwardness; rather, the sculpture reveals a sense of self that is both free and tied to ;universal interests of the city-state and the gods (i.e., concerned with its being-at-home, or "objective spirit"). What "objectivity" means here is what is "eternal" and "permanent," so what sculpture captures is the ways in which an individual reveals the divine and the ways we should carry ourselves when answering to the value being revealed. As Hegel argues, "the position of the subjective within the spiritual content of sculpture [i.e., being-at-home/objective spirit] is of such a kind that this subjective element is not expressed on its own account *but shows itself* as entirely permeated by what is substantive and objective and is not reflected back out of it into itself" (II:712, emphasis added). Thus, when we look at a sculpture, we do not find ourselves concerned with its inner life as such; rather, we concern ourselves with the way it shows us how to be at home within a specific domain. For example, when we look at a sculpture of Artemis (also known as Diana, see figure 1.1), we are not given an individual who is unsure of her surroundings or stifled by concerns about her health. What we see, rather, is a goddess who is at home with her

Figure 1.1- Artemis of Versailles [1st-2nd Century BCE]. "Diana Huntress, accompanied by a Hind" [marble, 200 cm]. Louvre, Paris. *Art Resource*

natural surroundings, so much so that her companion who is found *in* nature is in fact smaller than she and is domesticated by her. Indeed, we recognize at once that this sculpture is Artemis because of this recognizable command over the wilderness (i.e., the hunting and domestication of animals, child-raising, and chastity) and her use of the bow. She stands before us as the eternal presence of the human being's relationship to nature, showing us the ever-present reality of this relationship and our ongoing demand to answer to it and our capacity to be at home in it. *We* are called upon by Artemis to recognize the significance of our connection to nature, and therefore must remain sensitive to the ways in which our practices resonate or produce discord within it.

Sculpture is best able to reveal the "objectivity of spirit in its self-repose" for three reasons: 1) its objective, three-dimensional presence; 2) the difficulty of shaping the material used for sculpture; and 3) its expression of power. Sculpture is an artwork created through the use of three-dimensional material such as marble or bronze. This material reveals a reality outside of us to which we are called to witness on account of its magnitude. Indeed, as Hegel states, this heavy, three-dimensionality of the sculpture calls upon the artist to focus on how it is "connected with specific external surroundings and their spatial form and their locality" (II:702). Just as the artist must attend to the objective reality of the marble and bronze to carefully mold them, the artist's conception of the sculpture must remain focused on the substantial elements of his community and the environment in which the sculpture resides. To be able to adequately mold this material requires a tremendous amount of skill. When an artist goes to sculpt, he is hammering a material that one wrong strike could ruin. As such, the artist cannot focus on every singular characteristic that an individual body might have, and therefore, the sculpture

itself cannot be very expressive of the soul of that individual. Rather, the artist must generalize the human body—must exclude "the accidental particularity of the external appearance" (II:717)—so that what is made present are the universal, enduring powers of his community. Whether the material being used is wood, marble, gold, ivory, or stone, the god presented stands over and against us in a way that reflects the dignified and divine aspects of our culture. As Hegel argues, the Greeks "developed skill in the completely perfect handling of the material is inherent in the very nature of the ideal itself, because the ideal has, as its principle, entire entry into the sensuous field and the fusion of the inner life with its external existence" (II:772). The fact that we encounter subjectivity through heavy material shaped in the human form makes us aware of the "divine" presence of the gods through our actions; that is, we encounter our ongoing powers of creation through the shaping of material that we often experience as without meaning. We thus show to ourselves through working with such material how to adequately embody the human experience of being-at-home.

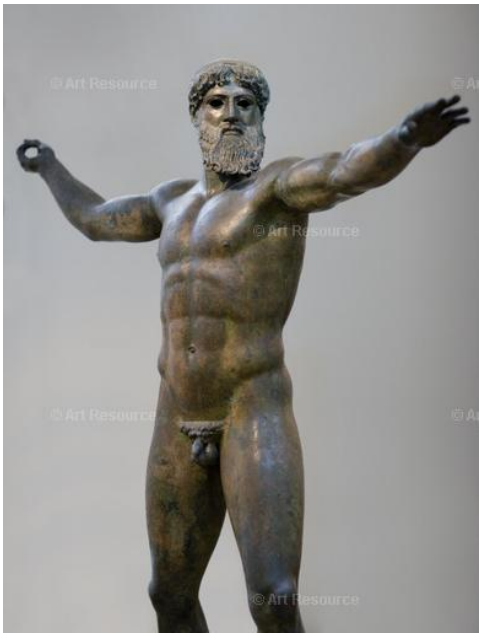

Figure 1.2 *Zeus or Poseidon* [460 BCE]. Bronze figure. National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Greece. *Art Resource*

We can explore this further by looking at the sculpture of Zeus (see figure 1.2 above).[18] In this work, Zeus is standing at the ready to throw his lightning-bolt (which is

[18] It is debated in archaeological circles whether this sculpture is one of Zeus or Poseidon. It is not my place to say whether it is this god or the other; however, for convenience I will refer to this sculpture as Zeus. For more on the debate, see George E. Mylonas, "The Bronze Statue from Artemision," *American Journal of Archeology*, Vol. 48 No. 2 (1944) pp. 143-160.

now missing from the sculpture) as indicated by the tautness of his stance. He intensely looks out toward the horizon, appearing confident and in control, presenting himself as having the potential to act in general. This sculpture shows us neither a god who remains above the world, nor someone who is caught within the throes of his situation. Rather, it is a stance of self-repose, a simple situation that, as Hegel describes "gives a determinate appearance to the independent divine shape, yet one which does not enter into further relations and oppositions, but remains self-enclosed and has its warrant in itself" (I:201). What we do not see in this sculpture is Zeus either enjoying or loathing a specific battle or situation with which he is engaged. This enjoyment or bitterness belongs to inner subjective life and is thus "*eo ipso* excluded from sculpture" (II:711). Rather, his body itself shows us that he is powerful, and remains within a "cheerful play of harmless liveliness" (II:741). This is not to say that this sculpture lacks individuality—Zeus' stance, the way his hair and beard are designed, and the (missing) lightning-bolt all stand as particular indicators that give this sculpture is individual identity. However, these features do not take us into Zeus' inner life; rather, they show his individuality *objectively*, allowing for what is divine and eternal to appear in and through such indicative qualities. In the tautness of his stance we are shown Zeus, authoritative and always aware, ready to do battle with whomever challenges his rule. The bronze of the sculpture provides a certain allure to his character, and the height and stance of the mold give to us the impression of his divine power. What we receive through sculptures is therefore neither a biography of the god or person depicted, nor the expression of a particular emotion within a particular situation. It is rather the universal expressed through this individual immortalized as this sculpture. Although we may have studied the

myths, legends, and plays that present Zeus within specific situations, through sculpture we are able to capture the blissfulness that marks the presence of a god and the ways in which this god is at home in his particular sphere.

If the content of sculpture is to reveal the universal, permanent element of the divine making itself real in the world, then it makes sense that the form of the sculpture would be the human figure because this is the external, objective figure that is most spiritual and that can actively subordinate itself to divine ends. The point is that the Greeks brought the divine to earth, to the community. However, what is also interesting about this form is that the body is not just what reveals the objective spirit of our community; it is also a natural occurrence. As Hegel argues, the human body is the "fundamental type" that is "*given* to sculpture" rather than being solely a human creation (II:713). Although the human form is a gift from nature, it becomes the job of the artist to take this natural object and shape it in a way that allows it to reveal what is significantly human. What Hegel describes as the essential task of the sculptor is to strip the human figure of its finite, transitory qualities so to emphasize "only the universal and permanent element in the bodily forms" without stripping away the sculpture's individuality (II:718). Through this work the content is able to be at home with its form; or, in Hegel's words, "spiritual freedom must in itself show itself as a totality and, in this reposing on its, as the potentiality for anything" (I:177). Every determined part of the sculpture must allow us to capture the god at home with its body and yet "appear as raised above

Figure 1.3 *The Ares Borghese* [5th Century BCE, marble, 2110cm]. Louvre, Paris. *Art Resource*

their body so that they feel their shape" (484). As viewers of sculpture, we come to recognize the importance of the human body as the thing which carries out the will of the divine by its being the very apparatus that can been be seen doing so. In this way, the body has risen above nature in a way that reveals something divinely human: each individual body as the carrier and expression of spirit at home with itself in the world.

For instance, we as spectators can distinguish between different ways of being-at-home by noticing the ways the sculpture of Ares (figure 1.3 on the previous page) and of Heracles (figure 1.4) embody their particular traits. Ares, the God of War, has a slender yet lean build and reclines upon his back leg in such a way as to manifest an air of repose regarding whatever war he looks upon. He carries a staff and has his face-mask drawn up, giving him the ability to look down and calculate his heroic move or casually watch over the roar of the battle. His slightly-open mouth displays neither self-satisfaction nor fear of fighting, indicating no desire for the battle's bloodiness or to flee from the scene;[19] and his eyes appear as if he was looking down at all engaged in battle, choosing no side and at peace with whatever side will win. Heracles, on the other hand, appears as if he is a bodybuilder. Hercules has tremendous muscles, his demeanor is much more aggressive, and yet he stands relaxed upon a ledge as though he has just completed one of this twelve tasks or is waiting for any task that might be given to him. Although we know Heracles to be a hero engaged in multiple struggles, this sculpture imparts to him the tranquility of the gods by showing him at home within his impossible tasks. Through the different

[19] As Hegel argues, "after the eye the mouth is the most beautiful part the face, provided that it is shaped according to its spiritual significance… [Sculpture] forms the mouth as to make it, in general, neither over-full nor tight, for lips that are all too thin are indicative of parsimony of feeling, too; so sculpture makes the lower lip fuller than the upper one... This more ideal form of the lips… gives the impression of a certain absence of desire." (II:736)

forms of Ares and Heracles, we are shown realities that we answer to in various ways, and what it means to be-at-home in our acknowledgements of them. With Ares, we are reminded that war is a reality that requires us to make decisions regarding strategy, combat training, how we approach both enemy combatants and civilians, and so on. To be at home within this reality is to acknowledge the reality of war as significant for the development of our culture, and not to get caught-up within the finite aspects of doing battle. To approach a battle as Ares does is to acknowledge the whole field, not to be caught up within the mere concerns of personal glory or animosity against the enemy. With Heracles, we acknowledge the reality of struggle, in the sense that it is a human reality to confront seemingly impossible tasks. Yet, by allowing ourselves to be at home within the reality of the "impossible," we see how human freedom and creativity is able to slay the Hydra and capture the scared hind of which the prideful Artemis cherishes. The sculpture of Heracles shows us that it is we, as human beings, who struggle against the impossible, yet it is also we, with our significant power, who overcome such impossibilities to realize the divine in this world.

Figure 1.4 *Heracles Farnese* [Roman copy 1st BCE, Greek original 5th Century BCE]. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples. *Art Resource*.

Sculpture's ability to reveal this perfect harmony between the content and the form as the being-at-home within a particular reality is what makes this particular art the "centre of classical art" (II:718). Indeed, sculpture's ability to make present being-at-home in its perfect embodiment is what makes these artworks, according to Hegel,

beautiful, for they show the "force of individuality, this triumph of concrete freedom concentrated in itself" through our recognition of the "cheerful and serene peace of their shapes" (*Aesthetics I,* 157). In other words, classical sculpture makes present to us the significance of being a free, creative being who develops and is recognized as being *here* amongst others in a rich tradition that celebrates such free creative actions that in turn develop their traditions further.[20] Sculpture exemplifies the harmony between the individual and universal that characterize classical art and Greek life because it places before us a content that is continuously developed within the traditions of Greek life and the artistic freedom required to make present such divine powers and allow the gods to stand as powerful, concrete individualities who have "substantive individuality, entire objective character, beauty at once *free* and necessary" (II:719). As such, the political and religious traditions of the ancient Greeks gave individuals a perspective on how to navigate various dimensions of life by making them objective through art; when the Greeks would freely pursue their own ends in these spheres, they were at the same time called to recognize the objective, divine character of said sphere and adequately answer to the demands of whatever situation arises within it. That is, the sculptures of the gods stand as objective ways in which we, as human beings, recognize our ability to make the divine known through the actions we decide to take. The being-at-home found within classical art thus provides us with the sight of our significant power to create our world and ourselves together through our responsible participation.

[20] As Houlgate interprets, the ultimate task of sculpture (according to Hegel), "is to present a free—divine or human—individual, not acting dramatically, but simply standing (or lying) there, occupying space and being what he is… He is thus completely at home in his body and is content simply to *be there*, to be *materially present*" (Houlgate, "Hegel on the Beauty of Classical Sculpture," 61).

Chapter Two: Romantic Art and the Modern World

2.1 Romantic Art[21] and Infinite Subjectivity

If classical art, for Hegel, is the "center of art" because of its "unification of the content with its entirely adequate shape" (I:427), then along with Hegel we must conclude that what he terms as "romantic" art is the *after* of such a unification.[22] That is, art no longer expresses what is significant as an object that blissfully stands before us like a god. Indeed, romantic art is no longer concerned with presenting as such the integration of content and form in the artwork itself, for it is no longer art's task to provide solely the objective manifestation of the significant. Rather, as Hegel posits, romantic art's task is to bring "before contemplation in this human form not the immersion of the inner in external corporeality, but conversely, the withdrawal of the inner into itself, the *spiritual consciousness* of God in the individual" (520, emphasis added). As we shall see, it is this "spiritual consciousness of God"—i.e., infinite subjectivity, a content that knows no limit, a *vagabond*—that marks the difference between what Hegel posits as classical and romantic art and gives romantic art its unique power. By making explicit the connection between romantic art and infinite subjectivity, I will argue how Christianity initiates the secular tradition of human rights in its recognition of the irreducibility of subjectivity to

[21] Hegel is not talking about the genre of "romanticism" here. Rather, "romantic" should more or less be understood as a *longing for* a meaning that will never be adequately revealed through the shapes such art has for its subject-matter.

[22] "But just as art has its 'before' in nature and the finite spheres of life, so too it has an 'after', i.e. a region which in turn transcends art's way of apprehending and representing the Absolute." (I:102)

any given home. In part and parcel with this recognition, I will also show how the vagabondage of subjectivity implies the recognition of intersubjectivity—that an expression of subjectivity is always already a determinate site for communication between human beings about our infinite subjectivity given its manifestation in external reality.

While classical art reveals truth through a "flawless externality" (I:483), whose purification allows the human body to be the proper site for the appearance of the divine or absolute, romantic art interrupts this "beautiful appearance" of content and form in order to seek a different truth found beyond the presence of the artwork (I:517). The difference is presented in how form and content are distinguished in the artwork. While the difference between form and content are of course present in classical art, they do not appear as such. Rather, this difference remains "immanent," allowing the artwork to remain an "undivided *whole"* (I:484). Classical art thus maintains what is of ultimate significance by presenting its content in complete correspondence with its form. Romantic art, however, expresses the significant—i.e., "absolute inner life" or "infinite spiritual subjectivity" (II:518)—by making the difference between form and content present in and through its form. The focus of romantic art is inwardness, which is potentially anything. It is an expression that must announce about this inwardness that it could never be adequately expressed externally. Having infinite subjectivity as its content, romantic art is in a position to plumb the limitless depths of subjective experience—the feelings, struggles, and thoughts of human life—in and through a multiplicity of finite shapes, expressions, and materials. Form is therefore free to present itself as *a* form through which subjectivity is expressed and yet, as form, could never

completely represent. Romantic art, therefore, breaks the immanent unity of content and form that classical art had accomplished by revealing in and through itself as only one way to depict subjectivity. In other words, while romantic art retains a correspondence between content and form, it presents this correspondence as infinitely determinable—we can only capture one-side of subjective life, and the form of such expression can only be an opening toward more ways in which subjectivity can be revealed.

This shift in art's relation to content and form can be characterized by what Hegel calls "spiritual beauty," a beauty that manifests itself through this particular work as a beyond that external appearance is inadequate to express yet that is nonetheless essential to our knowing of it (II:518). It is in this sense that Hegel describes this beauty as the "realm of shadows,"[23] for what is of ultimate significance is no longer expressed here as this specific artwork but rather as that which can only appear in and through the artwork as beyond it, as if it were always in the artwork's shadow, thereby out of sight. As such, romantic artwork "presents" itself as both a transcendence and liberation of external reality: a transcendence because it must "proceed into external existence and then withdraw out of this reality into itself again" (I:519); a liberation because even within its contingency, even though it is inadequate to express the infinity of subjectivity, romantic art "leaves externality to go its own way" and "allows any and every material… to enter the representation without hindrance even in its contingent natural existence" (I:527). Given that what is significant is inner subjectivity, which is infinite insofar as its content knows no limit, all kinds of topics and particularities can be the subject of romantic artwork. Thus, while classical art is posited as an external reality that is completely

[23] See *Aesthetics I,* 156-57 for Hegel's discussion of Ideal beauty and Schiller's *Das Ideal und Das Leben*.

present with its content (insofar as it portrays a particular individuality completely in conformity with the substance of its state and religion), romantic art portrays an external reality and negates it, thereby "making present" the infinite activity of subjectivity. What classical art posits as a substantial reality, romantic art rejects in order to reveal the authority of subjectivity.

For Hegel, the significance of infinite subjectivity presented by romantic art is one that is originally developed in the context of monotheistic religion, particularly Christianity. In this sense, classical and romantic art share a similar foundational beginning—both gain their content from religious practices. However, the religious content of romantic art does not arise within the "free totality" of "ethical substance" like that of the Greeks (i.e., out of the assuredness of their political and religious traditions). In classical art, it was the artists and poets themselves who "proclaim and reveal" what is of ultimate significance through their artworks (I:479). As such, art and religion are intimately tied in that all artistic and poetic works were sites of the being-at-home of the Greeks. In romantic art, however, the content of art is "given to art from the outside" (I:505). The lessons of the Christian Bible—the example of infinite subjectivity as related through the story of Jesus—are what initiate the transition to romantic art. Artists and poets are no longer those who reveal the divine as that which springs from our experiences here and now, but rather are those who express the limitlessness of human subjectivity as something that has already been revealed, and thus give interpretations of it in and through particular, finite, artworks. As Hegel states, "the content of romantic art is already present explicitly to mind and feeling outside the sphere of art. *Religion*, as the universal consciousness of the truth, constitutes here in a totally different degree the

essential *presupposition* for art, and, even regarded in its manner of appearing externally to actual consciousness in the real perceptible world, it confronts us as a prosaic phenomenon in the present" (I:526). This does not mean that romantic art is concerned with putting before us a subject-matter that is strictly tied to Christian or religious practice. On the contrary, it is that romantic art *implicitly* carries with it the significant aspects that Christianity reveals through its teachings—i.e., the process of overcoming external, finite reality in order to elevate and reconcile one's self with what is of ultimate significance: God, the benefactor of infinite subjectivity. What romantic art does is takes this "prosaic phenomenon" (i.e., the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the story which details the process of withdrawal into infinite subjectivity) and expresses it in a way that invites us to realize this for ourselves. In other words, art brings home to us the fact that no one can grasp the trajectory of our own development because to be a human being is to have the infinite, limitless experience of subjective inner life. One might say that the romantic artwork is like Jesus: it is created (born) in order to negate its immediate expression (suffer, die unto itself), and to reveal its content only through this withdrawal into itself (resurrection).

Romantic art also follows the process of recognizing infinite subjectivity—subjectivity learning its limitlessness, or *vagabondage*—in its historical and political development. That is, for Hegel, romantic art begins by depicting the content of Christianity, in which subjectivity starts to develop a sense of its limitlessness by turning inward. Next, romantic art reaches out into the mundane world and attempts to express its inward subjectivity in and through it. This is a subjectivity that is "concerned only with subjective infinite *self*-relation… [who] is only full of himself by being inherently infinite

individuality" (I:553, emphasis added). Historically, we see subjectivity becoming concerned with the "chivalrous" virtues of "subjective honor, love, fidelity" (I:555), through which inward subjectivity attempts to assert its power as an individual self in the world. Finally, romantic art, through subjectivity's further inhabitation of its vagabondage, lets "the world of the particular" (I:573) go free, letting all of external reality become worthy of artistic expression, taking on any content. As such, romantic art brings together two opposing worlds—that of "the spiritual realm, complete in itself" (infinite subjectivity) and "the realm of the external as such" (I:527)—indicating that it is only in and through external reality that we reckon with subjective inwardness. This development of romantic art from Christianity to the secular world is reflected in the political world as the manifestation of the privilege of subjectivity—human rights—which undermines the development of being-at-home: it does not matter where we are or what we choose; anything is possible. In and through such an announcement about the power of human subjectivity, Christianity initiates the secular tradition of human rights. Through subjectivity's turn inward, the finite external realities of human life are, as Hegel states, "set free and surrendered to everyone," thereby entering "the shape of common life [and] empirical humanity" (I:532). As political life within the romantic world develops, human rights becomes focused upon the rights of (specific) individuals to assert their subjectivity by proclaiming independence of *self* from within the kingdoms or states in which they are subjects and claiming a say in matters such as taxation, servitude, and other questions of law. Once human subjectivity asserts and demands recognition of its infinitude, it comes to see itself, and others, as irreducible to homes in

which it resides.[24] By putting the relation between home and human beings into question, subjectivity realizes its infinitude and becomes a vagabond that announces the ongoing project, implicit in the idea of human rights, of undermining received notions of and searching for a more adequate being-at-home.

This intertwining of both "religious" and political developments allows romantic art to reveal within its works the "sensuous elevated to the non-sensuous" (I:520). In other words, the artworks of this era are not meant to be experienced solely as *this specific* work, whether through sight or sound; on the contrary, they are more like guideposts that show in and through their materiality the process of withdrawal, thereby "revealing" infinite subjectivity. The individual arts that best reveal infinite subjectivity are painting, music, and poetry, for they do not confront us like sculptures that only expresses the human being in its objective form (i.e., in and through a three-dimensional, bodily figure), but rather express themselves as subjects who have an "independent inner life" of their own (II:794). What romantic art strives to make present is the depth of heart which subjectivity has *implicitly*, to bring to the foreground the vastness of subjectivity's expression of itself. However, by virtue of subjectivity being expressed as a determinate work—a guidepost, a communication of something—the vagabondage of subjectivity implies the existence of other subjectivities with which it communicates.[25] What is at

[24] As Terry Pinkard argues, romantic art's "dynamic drives it to develop out of itself a conception of the truth of humanity as *individuality*, as each person having a rich inner life, an "infinite subjectivity" that eventually detaches itself from its religious origins and comes to be concerned with itself in its prosaic, mundane world" (Pinkard, "Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic Art," 19).

[25] What this implies is that art, quite like a singular individual, is itself a limited perspective of infinite subjectivity that can only show us a way opening ourselves to meaning. Art calls on something other than itself to interpret it, to give it life. As Pinkard notices, the best romantic art "must be that which contains a sense of its own perspectivally limited view of itself," for art has ceased "to be *the* vehicle of the truth about spirit" (Pinkard, "Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic Art," 23). No singular work or specific genre of art gives us an absolute answer on what it means to be human, "we must figure out how to live in such a fractured world" (*ibid.*). I take this "figuring out" as a way of being in vagabondage: the artwork becomes

stake within romantic art is its "making present" of infinite subjectivity in a way that allows it to wander—to let it, through the artwork, be a site for co-definition of meaning between our finite and infinite selves and between others and ourselves: the power of *intersubjectivity*. That is, as Hegel notes, at stake is that "the heart, with its depth of feeling, and the spirit and a rich consciousness shall be entirely absorbed in the circumstances, situation, etc., tarry there, and so make out of the object something, new, beautiful, and intrinsically valuable" (I:610). What is put into question is this: how does art, as a specific expression that is always already mired in the struggles and everydayness of a particular situation, gain the possibility of being a site of intersubjective communication of romantic art's vagabondage—the always wandering infinite subjectivity? Romantic art, throughout all of its expressions—from Christian art, to expressions of chivalry, then finally to that of the mundane, secular world—implies a determinate site of communicability between subjectivities who have left their homes. What is it about Hegel's interpretation about the individual romantic arts that allows us to see how subjectivity puts into question its experience and turn its thinking toward what it means to experience the world as this subjectivity?

Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will show how Hegel's interpretation of romantic art and its development "makes present" infinite subjectivity, particularly focusing upon his descriptions of painting and dramatic poetry as my examples. The section on painting will focus on how, for Hegel, painting takes for its subject-matter "subjectivity aware of itself" (*Aesthetics II,* 802), developing from a more "ideal" expression of the awareness of infinite subjectivity (Christian art) to the awareness of

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the determinate bond from which we can continuously explore (or communicate) what it means to be human between each other.

subjectivity's life in the finite, secular world. Pursing infinite subjectivity, as interpreted through Christian art, we are exposed also to issues of intersubjectivity: Christian art, for instance thematizes religious love, in Jesus' relation with his family and disciples, which Hegel describes as the "giving up the consciousness of oneself, forgetting oneself in another self, yet in this surrender and oblivion having and possessing oneself alone" (I:540). Painting also manifests a "profound sympathy" with external reality, in the sense that the artist depicts nature or its particular world in a way that "echoes" the infinitely "free life" and wanderings of subjectivity (II:832). Painting continues to develop and express intersubjectivity, or rather, subjectivities in communication with one another. Indeed, it is through this *intimacy* that painting becomes a site of co-experience, a surface upon which infinite subjectivity *wanders* between worlds of meaning, continuously searching for suitable homes.

Following the discussion of painting, I will discuss Hegel's interpretation of dramatic poetry alongside an interpretation of Mercutio from *Romeo & Juliet*. For Hegel, dramatic poetry makes present how subjectivities, through their different, self-assured perspectives of the world or situation, confront obstacles that challenge their one-sidedness and take action against them (these obstacles either being the particular world they live in or each other). By making present the commitment of a character to her or his action and the effects it has on others and the world, I argue that the drama reveals a truth about subjectivity: we could only know the limitless powers of our subjectivity by making ourselves concerned with an actual, particular situation (or stage) in which *we* enact such powers (II:1162-3). Drama records how *the situation* is important for the development of infinite subjectivity, for it is through our speech and action with others in

a particular situation that we, as self-assured subjectivities, recognize the determinate effects our actions have in the world. I will thus interpret Mercutio as a character who recognizes the power of infinite subjectivity as a co-experiencing and co-definition, as his interactions with both Romeo and Tybalt concern how both have attempted to enclose themselves within their particular ways of living and will suffer negative consequences if not changed. Indeed, Mercutio's death is a result of subjectivities who have selfishly define for themselves what is right. His famous curse, "a plague a both houses,"[26] thus announces how the privileging of subjectivity in political life can lead to disaster (in this case, the eventual demise of Romeo, Juliet, and other members of their respective households) if subjectivity remains caught up in itself. In both sections, I will endeavor to show how infinite subjectivity is a vagabond whose persistent transgression of borders calls into question the way we inhabit and experience being-at-home.

2.2 Painting and the Making Present of Infinite Subjectivity through Intimacy

Painting, as Hegel argues, is the first of the individual romantic arts to express inner subjective life in such a way as to make possible a finite subject's familiarity with infinite subjectivity. As Hegel states, "painting… opens the way for the first time to the principle of finite and inherently infinite subjectivity, the principle of our own life and existence, and in paintings we see what is effective and active in ourselves" (II:797).[27] No

[26] Shakespeare, *Romeo & Juliet*, ed. Jill L. Levenson (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), Act 3.1, pg. 255

[27] It should be noted that Hegel is not saying "first" in terms of its appearance in history, but is rather appealing to the principle of painting and where it is first realized. Hegel's concern is not with mere historical fact but with painting *as art* in its own right, and as such he sought to determine what sort of subject-matter "harmonizes with the form" and how this form "corresponds exactly with that content" (II:799). For Hegel, even if paintings of the past had a subject matter pertaining to "man's inner life," it was

longer is art confined to expressing a subjectivity whose essential basis is a purified objectivity (the human body as such) founded within (a) tradition. Subjectivity becomes its own authority, setting up for itself its own rules and giving expression to itself in and through the artworks themselves. This is supported by painting through its materials: its medium is a canvas, or surface, that uses special techniques to manifest an expression of space that is *subjectively experienced* and not actually existent (II:805). Unlike the material of sculpture, which requires advanced technical skill to handle and, as three-dimensional, heavy matter, is limited in how it can present detail and subjectivity, the flat surface of painting allows for the expression of inwardness by departing from objectivity as such and depicting it as a "pure appearance of the inner spirit which wants to contemplate itself there on its own account" (II:801). By removing the *actual* depth of which sculpture necessarily has, the flat surface of painting is able to express the depth of heart found within the inner life of subjectivity.[28]

Painting also puts subjectivity in closer relation to other subjectivities by it providing a possible site for intersubjective communication. As Hegel states, "the separation in the work of art between its subject and the spectator must emerge and yet must immediately be dissipated because, by displaying what is subjective, the work, in its whole mode of presentation reveals its purpose as existing not independently on its own account but for subjective apprehension, for the spectator" (II:806). While the artist, through painting, makes present her own intimate, particularized, and individual

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the "Christian mode of expression" (particularly that of the Medieval and onward) that gave painting its depth of feeling (II:801).

[28] "Painting does not at all feel the lack of the third dimension; it discards it deliberately in order to substitute for what is simply a real object in space the higher and richer principle of color [and other manipulations]" (II:810).

experience of the world, the fact that painting's material allows for the portrayal of subjectivity glorifies it to the point that it invites any subjectivity to find itself portrayed therein. As such, painting not only expresses a significant aspect of the artist's subjectivity but also becomes a site whereby other subjectivities may come to share what they find to be significant in this specific portrayal of inner subjective life. The spectator becomes an excavator, exploring this site by carefully digging into the painting and collectively noticing and sharing with others their findings in an attempt to understand the painting's meaning together.[29] Painting is thus a site of co-experience and co-definition, of intersubjectivity, and a vulnerability of the artist to let the artwork's subjectivity *wander* off so that others have the opportunity to share in this infinite exploration.

It is this development of intimacy, as a development of the depth of feeling in subjectivity and between subjectivities, that is at play in Hegel's interpretation of painting (and romantic art in general). Indeed, the more painting expresses a subjectivity's intimacy with its own finitude (whether it is the artist's or the spectator's), the better the possibility for painting to show us a way at recognizing our infinite inner life. Painting can only hint the possibility of infinite subjectivity as having been here because this limitlessness can only appear "in the way that I, this specific individual, know and feel myself in it" (II:804). Consequently, infinite subjectivity itself can never *actually* be made present in any painting, for every artist or spectator always experiences it from their own perspective, and thus places it within a finite or one-sided expression (that is, makes

[29] For a discussion of the collective experience of understanding an artwork, see John Russon "Phenomenological Description and Artistic Expression," in *Phenomenology and the Arts*, ed. Licia Carlson and Peter Costello (Lanham: Lexington Books 2016), 7-9.

it visible). However, by virtue of a painting being a particular expression of subjective inner life, and the fact that it is a specific painting that is being experienced, each painting constitutes a "here" in which the vagabondage of infinite subjectivity makes its wanderings known and potentially explored by all.[30] As such, every painting is both a "self-enclosed whole" whose "limits and boundaries are not arbitrary" and an indicator of the infinitude of a subjectivity that always wanders and transgresses such borders (II:811). Hence is the "sensuous that is elevated to the non-sensuous": it is an intimacy that calls us to come close to the intricacies of reality by depicting it in a way that reveals the infinite inner life of subjectivity.[31]

Turning to Hegel's descriptions of painting and its relation to romantic art in general, we shall see how intimacy develops subjectivity's limitless power to explore the meanings of its finite self, others, and world. Hegel posits that the "center of painting," where painting first develops the ability to take subjectivity and its depth of heart as its subject-matter, is in Christian art (II:799). This is because Christian art expresses the inwardness of the figures it paints through the "presentation of the ideal beauty of form" (II:811)—i.e., an expression of subjective inwardness within a particular situation. It is in this sense that Hegel considers Christian painting to be "spiritually ideal": a

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[30] Hegel Scholar John Sallis interprets Hegel's description of painting as a making visible of "the escape of spirit from visibility, from confinement within the visible" [John Sallis "Carnation and the Eccentricity of Painting," in *Hegel and the Arts*, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 105). He further states that "painting can only trace the withdrawal of spirit from the external and sensible, *making spirit appear in its very disappearance,* making it visible precisely as it escapes visibility" (*ibid.*, italics mine). This "making spirit appear in its very disappearance" captures what I mean by painting's constituting a here from which the vagabondage of infinite subjectivity can be seen. A painting shows us a particular perspective of inner life from which all who view it can potentially explore its depth, and each work is a wandering of infinite subjectivity made to appear.

[31] "[A]rt entirely alters our attitude to [living realities] because it cuts away all the *practical* ramifications, which otherwise connect us with things in the world, and brings them to us in an entirely *contemplative* way; and it also cancels all our indifference to them and leads our notice, preoccupied otherwise, entirely to the situation portrayed, on which, if we are to enjoy it, we must pull ourselves together and concentrate" (II:835).

particularized individual figure who has withdrawn from the griefs of the finite world in which it lives and "gives itself up in face of God in order to find and enjoy itself in him" (II:816). In this moment of painting (and romantic art), this intimacy with God is described as love, the experience of "spiritual beauty as such" (I:540). Hegel describes the spiritual beauty that manifests itself within Christian art as love because religious love presents the "affirmative reconciliation" of feeling and soul; in other words, it can be "*felt* and contemplated" in the serenity of its depiction (I:539). What is significant, therefore, "makes itself present" in romantic artworks in an immediate sense—i.e., we see or feel such love before us in the details of figure or object presented—and mediately—i.e., we contemplate the meaning of this love and what it is to experience it through this presentation. Through this feeling of love and bliss, through initiation into the church, we gain both an intimacy with others and the world, and gain the self-assurance that, even though we may falter we are never limited to our tribulations and can be redeemed. As Hegel states, "the true essence of love consists in giving up the consciousness of oneself, forgetting oneself in another self, yet in this surrender and oblivion having and possessing oneself alone" (ibid.). It is through this spiritual love which makes itself present as a particular expression that *we* are able to experience infinite subjectivity in and through romantic artworks, individually and together.

For Christian painting in particular, an intimacy like religious love is best expressed in paintings of Jesus' relations with his family and disciples. Most notable of such paintings for Hegel are the depictions of maternal love between Mary and the newborn Jesus like that of Raphael's *The Tempi Madonna* (Figure 2.1). As he states, this love is an "inwardly satisfied love, the object of which is not a purely spiritual 'beyond'

but is present, so that we can love itself before us in in what is loved" (824). Here we see both the "finite" love of mother and child and an infinite love that over-reaches this moment, both of which are apprehended in relation the figure of infant Jesus. The finite, particular aspects of this love can be found in the depiction of Mary. Her adoring eyes, the semi-openness of her smile, the relaxation of her forehead, and her check pressing up against Jesus show us a mother satisfied and attentive to the care of her son. The way she gently cradles Jesus shows us the intimacy that comes with the mother and child relationship. Her embrace is neither stern as if worried she will drop her son, nor laid-back and passive; rather, it is playful and endearing. As a result, Jesus, fleshy and round like all babies, appears serene and accepting of his mother's love. Incidentally, it is in and through this serenity that the infinite is gleaned. Jesus is not caught up within the love of his mother; rather, he is focused *away* from her, as if his concern is *elsewhere.* Indeed, his gaze is not directed at a sole spectator; his sight appears to be set upon all, perhaps to suggest that we should not merely focus on how the specificity of Mary's love for him, especially as indicated in this moment, but how such a love can be actualized *here* amongst us in a way that remains open to the "divine."

Figure 2.1: Raphael (1508). *The Tempi Madonna* [oil on wood, 75 x 51 cm]. Alte Pinakothek, Munich. *Web Gallery of Art*

The development that occurs from Christian art and painting to that of chivalrous[32] painting can be interpreted as a response to this hypothetical call Jesus makes in Raphael's painting. That is, subjectivity, through painting, now begins to depict the actual world in a way that allows inner subjectivity to recognize *itself* as the true authority about itself and the world. We thereby start to see paintings that express the multitude of mundane situations in which we might find ourselves sympathetic. These paintings are most notably known as "genre paintings"—which Hegel describes as not just concerned with inner life as such but "with the inner life as *particularized* within" (ibid.)—because they cover a limitless variety of subject-matters and ways of expressing them.[33] Here is where painting truly becomes the "mirror of externality" in and through which "the inner life of the spirit. . . undertakes to express itself as inner"; a pure appearance that offers itself as a possible home for infinite subjectivity (II:801-2). Through the artist's attention to the most minute details of finite existence, we are given the opportunity to develop our intimacy with the everyday objects, events, and moments of our life by seeing them as affiliated with subjectivity's inwardness (i.e., as important aspects in our understandings of self and world). That is, the painting *reflects* back to us how we, as subjectivities, live *here* as those who have the limitless power to explore at length what these realities mean for us. As Hegel says at length:

[32] Hegel describes the moment of chivalry in romantic art where "the earlier *religious* inwardness not becomes one of a *worldly* kind… [T]he emotion which at first is exclusively religious attitude to human affairs as such; the spirit is spread abroad, is on the lookout for itself in its present world, and widens its actual mundane heart." Further down, he says, chivalrous art's content is "concerned only with subjective infinite *self*-relation; the subject is only full of *himself* by being inherently infinite individuality" (I:553). Thus, we shall see the paintings of this moment become more and more concerned with subjectivity's perspective of what is good and its intimacy with finite humanity upon the canvas.

[33] More detail on the scope of genres: "Here above all we find asserted the particular spirit of nations, provinces, epochs, and individuals, and this affects not only the choice of subjects and the spirit of the artist's conception, but also the sort of design grouping, shading, handling of the brush, treatment of specific colours, etc., right down to individual mannerisms and habits" (II:813).

> painting conducts us at once, on the one hand, into the present and its more closely related world of every day, but, on the other hand, in that present-day world it cuts all the threads of attractiveness or distress, of sympathy or antipathy, which draw us to it or the reverse, and it brings these present objects nearer to us as ends in themselves in their own particular liveliness (II:835).

So long as we keep watch, spiritual beauty can manifest itself in the most diverse, minute details of everyday life. Because these paintings endeavor to make explicit the goodness of subjectivity in and through the mundane experiences of the present world, these paintings better achieve the transcendence that Hegel posits as characteristic of romantic art. As Hegel states:

> the higher art rises the more does it carry its subject-matter into mundane and present reality, and thereby give to it the perfection of worldly existence, with the result that the chief thing is the sensuous existent created by art, while the interest of worship decreases. For here, after all, art has the task of working out these ideal subjects into actuality, *of making visible to sense what is withdrawn from sense,* and bring into the present, and humanizing, topics drawn from scenes that are far off and past (II:833, emphasis added).

By expressing or witnessing the mundane, transitory, and finite through painting—by bringing to expression what is explicitly external, transitory, and finite about human existence and the world as such—art makes it so the mundane world becomes the site of infinite subjectivity.

This capturing of the living moment and subjectivity's assertion of itself can be seen in a painting like *The Fair at Oegstgeest* by Jan Havicksz Steen (figure 2.3). In Steen's painting, we see people celebrating upon the fairgrounds of town that borders a river. Along the river, we see ships sailing toward the shores to drop off visitors from out of town. In the left-hand corner, a woman is assisted ashore by a younger girl (possibly a

daughter or grand-daughter) while the other passengers stay on-board to engage in casual conversation. As our eyes move toward the right side of the painting, we notice the

Figure 2.3: Steen, Jan Havicksz (between 1655 and 1660), *The Fair at Oegstgeest* [oil on canvas, 28 x 39 in]. Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit

fairgoers start to gather. This can be gleaned through the depictions of people embracing, friends greeting one another, and children playing games in the foreground. And as our eyes move further along the path toward the town square, we can spot adults either dancing in a circle or playing a form of "ring-around-the-rosy" and people crowding a stage to watch a play or listen to an orator. When we assume the perspective of the painter and see the scene broadly, we notice the partly cloudy sky and feel the slight breeze of the wind that is indicated by the flag flurrying on the building and the direction in which some of the branches of the trees seem to be bending. What Steen brilliantly captures is the gaiety and bliss of the perfect festival day. It is a work that allows us to be enveloped in the nostalgia of tender moments (especially that of the artist's), as it makes us figuratively step back from our usual engagements with the world and asks us to contemplate what it is to experience such wonderful times. Through the use of color, light, brush stroke, etc., Steen captures an intimate moment in its intimacy: we are brought closer to the living moments of life thanks to the artist's ability to make present

life in the moment of its living.[34] Neither are we caught up in any sort of substantial or serious concern; subjectivity is enjoying itself, neither worshiping the divine nor engaged in any dignified work of the state. We are meant to see the ways that we as subjectivities enjoy such wonderful days as expressed in this painting of a fair.

This intimacy finally develops into one in which art moves past subjectivity's mere self-assertion of its own goodness through the portrayal of objective scenes into an expression of the artist's activity as a painter. Here, the artist directly involves herself through the very expressions offered by painting itself, attempting to render visible the ways in which things offer themselves to visibility.[35] In other words, what the artist wants us to recognize is the very manipulations she uses to reveal the object of expression, for it is through these manipulations that we see how the object has opened itself up to her. As Hegel notices, the artist's "skill in production, his way of seeing, his manner of treatment and elaboration, his living absorption in the entire range of his chosen tasks, and the soul and *vital love* of this execution itself" is what becomes significant in painting (II:836). The painter plays with all the methods at her disposal to help us see with her the significant ways in which painting makes possible subjectivity's power to express its vision of the world. By pressing further into such kinds of expression, painting is able to reveal itself as something more than just pure appearance; it becomes a testimony to the

[34] "The painter… espies the most ephemeral movements, the most fleeting facial expressions, the most momentary appearances of colour in this kaleidoscope, and brings them before our eyes in the interest of this vivacity of appearance which, but for him, would vanish" (II:836).
[35] As Merleau-Ponty argues, the painter is an interrogator who asks of the objects in her vision "to unveil the means, visible and not otherwise, by which it makes itself an [object] before eyes" [Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, "Eye and Mind" in *The Primacy of Perception*, trans. Carleton Dallery, (Evanston, IL: Northwest University Press (1964)), 166].

very ways in which our understandings of self and world are not given and require us to wander away from our homes and seek out broader understandings.

Take M.C. Escher's lithograph *Hand with Reflecting Sphere* (figure 2.4) as an example. Presented before us are two perspectives: the spherical mirror's and Escher's himself. What is rendered visible is the sort of play that exists in the phenomenon of seeing ourselves. The spherical mirror represents a sort of *global*, or third-person perspective, one that we often take when describing ourselves. Escher, in this instance, shows us what he takes himself to look like, his quaint home, books that he studies from, and so on. Yet, rather than just giving us this self-portrait, he also shows us his *own* first-person perspective by showing us the very mirror with which he sees himself. By showing the mirror as placed in his hand, Escher shows us that such a perspective on himself is always already subject to change depending on how one moves the mirror. Indeed, this spherical mirror also reflects things behind it, but cannot be seen from our angle. If he were to move to that other side, the perspective he originally started with would become hidden behind the mirror and a new perspective of himself would emerge. In fact, how we understand our self and the world in which we live always involves this sort of double seeing, a sight that

Escher, MC. Hand with Reflecting Sphere. 1935. Netherlands. In MC Escher. Accessed September 17, 2018. https://www.mcescher.com/about-this-website/.

is ours and take to be who we are and a horizon which we cannot completely grasp.[36] By making visible subjective perspective itself, Escher shows us the contingency of any specific way we might define ourselves.

However, this is not all Escher's lithograph reveals. The very fact that the spherical mirror implies another side to the reflection reveals the possibility of the painting (and experiencing of one's own subjectivity) as being a site of intersubjectivity: that my perspective of this object is open to the experience and definition of others. That is, because the painting renders visible one side of infinite subjectivity, it becomes possible for other subjectivities to recognize Escher and themselves in the same reflection and communicate what the expressed phenomenon renders visible for them. In other words, in order for what is infinite about subjectivity to appear through an expressed aspect of it, the painting must allow for the possibility of others to come close and *wander* in so to give their perspectives upon this painting. Returning to Escher's work, we see that he makes present the finitude of both our personal and third-person perspectives. However, it is not merely this or that perspective that he wants us to notice as significant. Rather, what is significant for Escher is our intersubjectivity—our ability to communicate our vastly different perspectives—and how painting, by being a perspective, is always already a site of communication between perspectives, for myself and for others. It is by allowing subjectivity to *wander* within this site of intersubjectivity,

[36] Russon provides an excellent study of the phenomenon of appearance through portraits in his book *Sites of Exposure* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017), 10-18. What he reveals is that a portrait is always "a portrait *of a point of view*" that renders visible not just ourselves but also "any determinate aspect of the world that is appearing to us, *insofar as it is appearing to us*" (*ibid.*, 18). Thinking in terms of a portrait allows us to recognize that an experience of ourselves is also situated and perspectival, that "who I am implicitly appears in what I perceive," and thus is something that always remains in question.

or rather, to let infinite subjectivity be a vagabond that makes itself known within every possible site of co-definition, that allows such limitlessness to be noticed.

2.3 Subjectivities in Conflict: Dramatic Poetry and Mercutio's Death as a Result of Privileging Subjectivity

If, then, painting as a romantic art is the visual presentation of inward subjectivities— through their always developing intimacy with finite human reality— opening themselves to the co-definition of reality and lived experience, dramatic poetry *qua* romantic art is the presentation of the conflicts that occur between subjectivities in co-defining and co-experiencing the situations in which they live. Hegel posits that drama presents itself as a disequilibrium that occurs because a character's action and "specific aim" within an established place "collides" with "circumstances, passions, and [other] characters," leading to more actions and reactions that "in turn necessitate a resolution of the conflict and discord" (II:1159). In other words, an action, taken to fulfill a character's self-imposed end, finds itself in conflict with the aims and ends of others or the world in which it resides, encounters obstacles, and then through a final action or event, recognizes it must give up its one-sidedness or perish, either through its tragic demise or developed self-awareness. As Hegel states, "what we see in front of us [in dramatic poetry] are certain ends individualized in living characters and very conflicting situations, and we see them in their self-assertion and display, in their reciprocal influence and

design; and all this we see too the self-grounded final result of this whole human machinery in will and accomplishment, we see it in its crisscross movement and yet in its final peaceful resolution" (II:1159). Drama, therefore, has two requirements for its expression: 1) that there be some form of "organized national life" that allows personality to develop its inner subjective while retaining its connection to its community (ibid.); and 2) that within these given circumstances, the individual actors be able to recognize their actions as a realization of their will and as a result are responsible for the way it impacts others in the world.[37] What occurs in a drama is the confrontation of subjectivities who, aware of the powers of their inwardness, attempt to assert their opposing perspectives of the present world (whether right or wrong) in the community in which they belong. This mutual one-sidedness results in a struggle in which these self-assured subjectivities learn to recognize themselves as being one-sided and so accept a certain fate in which the community—the actual "substance and aim of human individuality" (ibid.)—returns to equilibrium. The resolution, whether "made present" in the drama or to the audience's inner thoughts, is the recognition that it is through our belonging together in any particular situation that we are able to develop our limitless capacity to creatively think and critique the ways in which we see ourselves and the world. As Hegel states:

> "it is the Divine here in its community, as substance and aim of human individuality, brought into existence as something concrete, summoned into action and put into movement.
>
> But if in this way the Divine is the inmost objective truth lying in the external objectivity of the action, then… a decision on the course and outcome of the complications arising from the action *cannot lie in the hands of the single individuals who oppose one another,* but in those of the

[37] "The issue of his act proceeds from the individual himself [or herself] and has its repercussion on his character and circumstances… In this way alone does the action appear as an *action*, as the actual execution of inner intentions and aims. The individual identifies himself with their realization and in it finds his own will and his own satisfaction, and now with his whole being must take responsibility for what the issue is in the external world" (II:1161).

> Divine itself... Therefore the drama, no matter in what way, must display to us the vital working of a necessity which, itself self-reposing, resolves every conflict and contradiction" (II:1162-63, emphasis added).

No one of us contain the truth of action because as finite beings we could only ever make explicit an interpretation of infinite subjectivity. However, by being concerned *here*, *with others in this situation*, about the ways in which we come to recognize subjectivity, our limitlessness becomes recognizable to us in a way that reveals our cooperation with one another. It is continual co-definition that allows us to continually confront the vagabondage of our subjectivities.

Through the presentation of conflict between one-sided, self-assured subjectivities, dramatic poetry reveals itself as a *stage* upon which different perspectives of a world discover *together* that infinite subjectivity is always beyond our singular expressions of it and beyond our own awareness of it. That is, dramatic poetry brings into close quarters finite individuals who believe themselves to know what is significant only to learn that infinite subjectivity always wanders away from even one's own grasp. It shows how our singular interpretations of ourselves and the world in which we live can never fully account for such realities: these realities require an ongoing, collective effort to truly understand them. By being a site of interpersonal or self-contained conflict, dramatic poetry reveals infinite subjectivity, as Hegel describes, only through the "independent confrontation of the two sides," with neither side holding completely what is truly substantive (I:575). When what is substantive resists being made present in art, inwardness and externality become infinitely multiplied—i.e., any mundane subject-matter, settings, etc., can be depicted as art—and as such become separate and perfected in their own right. Hegel states, "the progress and end of romantic art is the inner

dissolution of the artistic material itself which falls asunder into its elements; its parts become free and in this process, conversely, subjective skill and the art of portrayal are enhanced, and the more substantial element is discarded, all the more are these perfected" (ibid.). Drama best presents this duplication of subjective skill and externality because it not only reveals the subjective skill of the author in creating characters who, through their subjective pathos,[38] compel us to be concerned with their existence, but also because drama "demands a complete scenic production in order to give real life to the whole work of art" (II:1158). As such, dramatic poetry reveals romantic art as that which explicitly draws its resources and inspiration from the finite human world, gives this world a sense of dignity, and shows it as the site that makes it possible that subjectivities continuously meet and confront the limitless powers of their own and other's inwardness.

By giving dignity to the finite human world, dramatic poetry is called to present its characters as concrete, many-sided human beings. Even though a character possesses some particular pathos to which it is committed, it must also present itself as a complete individual who is capable of being more than its particularity (its collection of characteristics it shares with others). As Hegel states, "the character must combine his particularity with his subjectivity; he must be a determinate figure and, in this determinacy, possess the force and firmness of one 'pathos' which remains true to itself" (I:240). We do not wish to see a character merely present itself as the manifestation of a particular feeling, trait, disposition, and so on, but to present itself as an individual who

[38] For Hegel, subjective pathos is a "casual particular passion, whether it be self-concentrated and expressed only aphoristically or whether it can storm out and explain itself completely" (II:1173). Objective pathos is substantive, in the sense that a character or characters have an enduring quality that "creates a universal, lasting, and profound dramatic effect" (*ibid.*). Essentially, the difference is between what sort of concern the character has: either the character, through its own will, becomes attached to a one-sided passion or it concerns itself with problems greater than the individual itself (e.g.- moral conflict, matters of state, etc.) yet still calls upon its power to carry out some sort of action.

knows itself to be responsible for its actions. "The chief thing" Hegel argues, is "the all-pervasive individuality which collects everything together into the unity which is itself and which collects everything together into the unity which is itself and which displays itself in speech as the one and the same source from which every particular word, every single trait of disposition, deed, and behavior springs" (II:1177-78). It is in this sense that Hegel describes subjectivity in modern romantic art as an "inner but undeveloped totality" (I:580). The character, through the firmness of its actions and commitment to its pathos, knows itself to be responsible for its action and believes its particular route to be correct. Whatever might come to it is a result of its self-assured effort that has collided with the aims and efforts of others, and therefore lets "come what may" in either a tragic or comedic denouement. Through the recognition (either by itself or by the audience's) of the folly of its self-enclosed attitude (an attitude that could never completely be what it says it is), the character becomes more than what it is.[39] Neither purely despicable nor laudable, it retains a depth that brings it to life before our eyes, allowing what is substantial to present itself through the end of these character's conflicts.

Hegel posits two genres of drama that best reveal the confrontation of finite subjectivities as a site where the powers of infinite subjectivity are encountered: tragedy, which Hegel describes as a situation where "[subjectivity's] attitude to one another is hostile"; and comedy, which is described as subjectivities who learn that their one-sided

[39] This sort of recognition is present through the power of simile. As Hegel argues, "similes have the aim of showing that the individual has not merely immersed himself directly in his specific situation, feeling, or passion but that as a high and noble being he is superior to them and can cut himself free from them" (I:417). Further, he adds "this liberation of soul is what similes express, in the first place quite formally. It is only a profound composedness and strength of soul which is able to objectify even its grief and its sorrows, to compare itself with something else, and therefore contemplate itself *theoretically* in strange things confronting it." Similes therefore have the ability to liberate us from the appearance of the happening in order to find something deeper or spiritual. This is something which romantic art perfects because of its making present the transcendence of art. See Hegel's discussion of simile, see 410-21.

attitudes are "inwardly self-dissolving" (II:1163). Of course, tragedy can involve self-reflection just as comedy can involve hostile and opposed characters. However, what Hegel means is that tragedy reveals a character as caught up in unfortunate situations and yet who chooses, through their depth of feeling and self-assuredness, to continue to the end (be it death, destruction, etc.), while comedy reveals a character's "senseless gaiety" even after their actions have failed.[40] Whatever their differences, tragedy and comedy have at least one thing in common: neither the character nor the situation completely contains what is significant within itself. On the contrary, the performance only shows us possible ways to express the significant: tragic or comedic characters make present their finitude through action and conflict within a specific conflict and situation, and the acceptance of their finitude through the outcome of their actions is what allows the audience to witness the performance as not just a performance, but a way of recognizing our powers of re-interpreting the givenness of our shared situations. Art becomes something that requires a twofold attentiveness; or rather, it has fully revealed itself both as a phenomenon that is experienced *and* as that with which we can question the meaning of this experience.[41] By making present subjectivities in conflict with one another, drama is able to relay to us the depths and magnitude of our subjectivity and the ways it always goes beyond the mark used to "present" it here. The privileging of subjectivity in dramatic poetry (and romantic art in general) allows us to witness both how our self-assuredness can be problematic and the need to be engaged in a healthy co-definition of

[40] For more on tragedy and comedy, see Hegel's brief discussion in *Aesthetics II*, 1222-36.
[41] Hegel describes romantic art's content as "free concrete spirituality," which is to say that we experience art as this artwork that withdraws into itself—i.e., art as such becomes an object that we can contemplate about. It is now a knowledge that we can study. See pages 79-81 in the introduction to Hegel's *Aesthetics I* for further discussion of romantic art as the transformation of art to a knowledge.

ourselves and the world in which we live.[42] Indeed, drama can make present the possible disasters a community can face if the subjectivities that compose it remain caught up in their mere individuality or mistake their perspectives as completely in line with what is substantial.

We can see the recognition of the problems and results of the mere self-assuredness of character, for example, in *Romeo & Juliet*, and specifically through the role of Mercutio, his tragic and perhaps avoidable death, and its aftermath. What we shall see is how Mercutio, because of his position in relation to the community of Verona and the feuding families, his attempts at swaying Romeo and Tybalt to break from their enclosed attitudes to the world, and the "curse" he utters before his death, is an example of both someone who responsibly engages in the shared activity of co-definition and the disasters that can result in remaining enclosed in our singular perspectives. In other words, Mercutio is an example of what it means to be a subjectivity which, through the recognition of its finitude, gives due justice to the world in a responsible way.

Mercutio is a kinsman to the Prince of Verona. This relation defines Mercutio as both someone who is outside the family feud and someone who is a respected member of the city that includes the feuding families.[43] This places Mercutio in a position to be able to identify whether another character has adopted a restrictive, one-sided attitude toward

[42] As Stephen Houlgate notices concerning tragedy, "a tragic outcome is made necessary by the characters' own *free* insistence on pursuing their own interests relentlessly. Any such necessary, unavoidable tragic outcome could, therefore, always be avoided, if only the characters involved would consider trusting and yielding to one another in some way" (Houlgate, Stephen, "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," *Hegel and the Arts*, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 166).
[43] Not only is Mercutio a good friend to Romeo, Capulet invites him formally through his letter to attend his feast (Shakespeare, trans. 2000, *Romeo and Juliet* 1.2.69)

the world.[44] For instance, in the first half of Act 1 Scene 4,[45] we see Mercutio playfully jesting at Romeo's melancholy in an attempt to get him to broaden his horizons on love. These jests include: "You are a lover; borrow Cupid's wings, and soar with them above a common bound" (1.4.15-16); and "If love be rough with you, be rough with love; prick love for pricking, and you beat love down" (1.4.25-26). In both couplets, Mercutio thematizes elevation and moving beyond above the all-too-finite obsession that Romeo has for Rosaline, seeking to shake up the firmness of his character. Indeed, this concern over Romeo's well-being reaches its peak in Mercutio's monologue on the obsessions of vain fantasies, where Mercutio warns Romeo that "dreamers often lie" and that those who obsess often fail to make their dreams a reality because they only seek the satisfaction of their passion (1.4.49-101). While we witness Mercutio's gaiety, wit, bawdiness, and good humor in scenes with Romeo, we see Mercutio's anger, passion, sense of justice, and possible rashness in relation to Tybalt. Retaining his wit at all moments, Mercutio nonetheless scorns and mocks Tybalt's sense of honor because he sees it as quite shallow. As he says to Benvolio, "The pox of such antic, lisping, affecting phantasms, these new tuners of accent! . . . . Why, is this a lamentable thing, grandsire, that we should be thus afflicted with these strange flies, these *fashionmongers*, these 'pardon-me's,' who stand so much on the new form that they cannot sit at ease on the old bench? O their bones, their bones!" (2.3.27-34, emphasis added). This perception of shallowness is perhaps why Mercutio displays a sense of rashness when Tybalt enters the pub in the first scene of Act

[44] It is also interesting that Mercutio's name is derived from Mercury, the Latin name of the Greek God Hermes, who is known for being the Messenger of the Gods and somewhat of a jester, crossing borders or boundaries, and ruling over the acts of speech and interpretation. One could suggest, perhaps, that Mercutio is like his namesake who seems to allow himself to wander between self-assured and seemingly enclosed subjectivities as a subjectivity with a concern for the condition of Verona himself.

[45] For the rest of this section, I will be citing *Romeo and Juliet* in text by placing in parentheses the act and scene number followed by the corresponding line numbers of the quote.

Three. Given both his friendship to Romeo and his position in the kingdom, Mercutio finds it right to be provocative with Tybalt because he knows Tybalt to be looking opportunistically for his "first and second cause" against Romeo (2.3.23-24). That is, Mercutio is not pestering Tybalt because he feels his honor damaged but rather to reveal Tybalt's real motives. Mercutio's scorn is righteous and he knows it, the hot day or not.

With this many-sidedness that presents itself through his characteristic wit and his sense of righteousness, and that is not caught up one-sidedly in particularities such as honor or love, Mercutio can be said to be an example of what Hegel calls a "total individuality" (Hegel, I:236). While not an epic hero, Mercutio does contain a "wealth of emotional life" (I:237) that does not remain trapped within an abstract pathos but rather unfolds through a sense of righteous justice that is "made the essential and conspicuous trait of character and which leads to specific aims, decisions, and actions" (I:238). As this total individuality—a specific subjectivity who recognizes its limitless power of definition—Mercutio stands as an excellent foil to both Romeo and Tybalt given that they are caught within the self-assuredness of love and honor, respectively. Mercutio's jests and provocations serve as a call for both Romeo and Tybalt to be more than they are, or rather, to realize that their one-sidedness will lead to unforeseen consequences for both themselves and for the state of Verona.[46] This is why Mercutio's death and curse are

[46] My description of Mercutio is akin to how Hegel scholar Jennifer Ann Bates describes the famous Shakespearean character, Falstaff, in her book *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010). As Bates interprets, Falstaff's wit "reflects outward" the specific virtues certain character's stake their lives upon, thereby becoming a mirror upon which characters can recognize "in a social context, their own serious infinite point" (Bates, *Hegel and Shakespeare*, 145). By being a subjectivity that allows another to recognize the social field in which their actions and virtues are recognized, Falstaff is able to "cure sovereign self-reflection from its alienation. If one does not get the joke, one is simply too simple minded" (*ibid.*, 146). We can apply Bates' interpretation of Falstaff to Mercutio so to better understand his gaiety toward Romeo and scorn toward Tybalt. Mercutio is a social mirror in and through which Romeo's obsession with love and Tybalt's overzealous honor appear miniscule in context of the city, and his wit seeks to cure them over their alienation. When this mirror

so tragic and powerful. While provoking Tybalt to fight, Mercutio's makes it clear that he does not seek to kill him. As Mercutio says to Tybalt, "Good king of cats, nothing but one of your nine lives, that I mean to make bold withal, and as you shall use me hereafter, dry-beat the rest of the eight" (Shakespeare, 3.1.76-78). At most, Mercutio is seeking to make an example of Tybalt's finite sense of honor by giving him an injury that would serve as a reminder to think more broadly than his own sense of worth which Mercutio, as a statesman, has a right to do.[47] However, Romeo's commitment and obsession with love leads him to intervene in this just fight. By placing himself in the center of the battle and preventing a crucial moment of possible reinterpretation (understood as Mercutio's aggression toward Tybalt and his overzealous sense of honor), Romeo allows Tybalt to fatally stab Mercutio from under Romeo's arm. This man who was an example of how to be a subjectivity that remains open to others and the world dies as a result of the one-sidedness of his friend whose firm embrace of newfound love has made him fickle, and the one-sidedness of a man who kills merely to mend his supposedly damaged honor. When such an openness to the collective activity of co-defining the situation—the allowance of subjectivity to wander and discover new meanings—"disappears" from the

shatters, no more do the actions of Romeo, Tybalt, and the rest of the families and factions get reflected back into the social field. Their alienation ends in tragedy.

[47] Indeed, it could be said that Mercutio turns Tybalt's "first and second cause" around on him, since Mercutio knows that Tybalt seeks to duel Romeo (which is decreed illegal by the Prince in Act I) and has been dishonored by Tybalt's mere identification as someone who "consorts" with Romeo, not as someone with a title with the state of Verona (3.1.44-48).

play as it does through Mercutio's death, the conflicts between seemingly enclosed subjectivities become destructive.

Mercutio's final words give us a warning about the violent results that can occur when we limit ourselves to our singular "subjective" attitudes toward the world and the situations to which we are subjects:

> ROMEO. Courage man the hurt cannot be much
> MERCUTIO. No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church-door, but 'tis enough, 'twill serve. Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world. A plague a both your houses! Zounds, a dog, a rat, a mouse, a cat, to scratch a man to death! A braggart, a rogue, a villain, that fights by the book of arithmetic! Why the devil came you between us? I was hurt under your arm.
> ROMEO. I thought all for the best
> MERCUTIO. Help me into some house, Benvolio, or I shall faint. A plague a both your houses! They have made worm's meat of me—I have it, and soundly, to your houses (3.1.95-108).

Through his use of metaphor—his body "peppered" and ready to be consumed by worms, his bestiary that, all being domesticable and under his care, has scratched him to death—Mercutio recognizes his death as the loss of any chance for a peaceful end to the feud. Indeed, his metaphor *dehumanizes* the families, in the sense that by being subjectivities caught up in themselves they have become like animals and will meet the same fate as him. By flaying and allowing him to be flayed, both families are now guilty: "a plague a *both* your houses." The drama will now unfold toward the fateful deaths of Tybalt, Paris, Romeo, Lady Montague, and Juliet—all of which could have been avoided. After the death of Mercutio, even the state becomes powerless to stop this plague, and it suffers

just as much as the families. It is only once the effects of irresponsible actions have reached their conclusion that self-assured subjectivity will be shaken enough to make itself vulnerable and "make present" infinite subjectivity once again within the walls of Verona.[48]

Through Hegel's interpretation of drama as the actualization of subjectivities in conflict and communication within a particular setting, we can interpret *Romeo and Juliet* as a dramatic poem that shows both responsible and irresponsible ways in which we, as subjectivities, communicate with one another. Mercutio can be understood as a figure who remains open to the world around him, letting his mood wander in his interactions with certain settings and people he is interacting with, while characters such as Romeo and Tybalt remain caught up within a particular feeling and through it meet their tragic end. Indeed, Mercutio, as a responsible subjectivity, allowed himself to be at home in Verona as a sort of vagabond: he always attempted to cross the boundaries between Capulet and Montague, between Romeo's infatuation with love and Tybalt's sense of honor, and never remained caught up in himself. While he as a particular subjectivity could never "make present" the infinite powers of subjectivity completely, his jests, words, and actions always hinted at such a power. Once the dust is settled, Mercutio's death, along with the demise of Romeo and Juliet, hints at the limitless power of subjectivity once more. No longer do Lords Capulet and Montague try to dominate over the city, but they forgive one another, promising to each other to remember the tragedy that occurred together, allowing each other to continuously define what this moment

[48] See Act 5, Scene 3, lines 171-310 of *Romeo and Juliet*, where the Prince describes his punishments and the feuding families make promises honor the dead, end their quarrels, and do what it takes to maintain peace in Verona.

means for them and others in the Verona. The plague has run its course and all that is left to do is mourn the losses each has suffered. The possibility of the limitless powers of subjectivity making itself known in this world is “present” once more, and it remains up to us to determine just how such a wanderer shall be welcomed.

Chapter 3: Contemporary Art and Being-in-the-(W)hole

Section 3.1 Of (W)holes and Discovery: Restricted Perspectives of Art and the Authentic Approach Toward Art

Romantic art introduces us to the vagabondage of our subjective powers, not only in relation to ourselves but also in relation to other subjectivities and the world in which we are situated. Art brings itself into such an intimate relation with finite human reality and its limitless power to reinterpret its own existence that art no longer needs to bring to form the "divine" as such. Rather, art now appears humble; it makes present anything and everything involved in our "imperishable humanity," from hyper-detailed depictions of the world around us to the most "abstract" thoughts of inner life and beyond (I:608). As Hegel reminds us, "no matter how excellent we find the statues of the Greek gods, no matter how we see God the Father, Christ, and Mary so estimably and perfectly portrayed: it is no help; we bow the knee no longer" (103). What is of ultimate significance, as shown in contemporary romantic art, is now completely mundane. It is allowed to roam, to let its content wander away from any posited "perfect art" and find shelter within an indefinite amount of expressions that can appear mundane, ugly, and insignificant. What has changed is not art but the world in which its works are presented. This world is one characterized by "the cultivation of reflection" and "freedom of thought," and the artist today is called to express *this* world (I:605). In this sense, art

today still expresses the significant in and through an appropriate form quite like the art of worlds past—that is, art is still concerned with the meaning of our existence, with who *we* are. However, this art is not trying to return to its posited, initial task as stated within classical art. Contemporary art does not take itself to be giving expression to an objective absolute meaning that gives us an established home and purpose in the world. On the contrary, we allow our particular expressions to be a launching point for *any* subjectivity to notice the infinite depths of itself and relation to others and the world. Art now decenters itself from its more or less posited foundation to reach further and further into the prosaic, and its form demands a *double* focus: a focus on both what is being experienced as such (the ways in which this work appeals to our being-at-home) and the meaning of this experience (i.e., how it leaves open space for infinite subjectivity to wander about, to notice our limitless capacity of co-definition of a specific here that we experience together). [49]

Given that we are still operating in a world that glorifies individual subjectivity and its specific perspective, contemporary art can be analyzed in terms of Hegel's analysis of romantic art. Because we "bow the knee no longer" to a transcendent meaning reflected in the posited integration of form and content, contemporary art does not have to concern itself with finding a completely adequate form for what is of ultimate significance. Rather, contemporary art appeals to our particular situations and worlds by

[49] "The *philosophy* 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" (I:11). It should also be noted that this double focus can be made toward past art, or rather, that this double focus is a feature of all art in general. However, contemporary art (which I interpret as art made in the period in which Hegel gave his lectures up until the present) "makes present" this double focus explicitly because its content—infinite subjectivity—is never present as such, whether as a divine figure or mystical presence/absence, and its form is often that which we are most familiar in our everyday lives. The turn toward "intellectual consideration" comes about with the secularization of art, thus shifting the way we can perceive past art.

displaying increasingly finite and specific and expressions, things that help make up our particular world and our subjectivity but do not claim about themselves a kind of absolute, transcendent character. Indeed, it is common for us not to concern ourselves with said art, for the more art reaches further into mundane life, the less it commands us to behold it as a significant thing in itself. Hegel recognizes this current situation, for he says of art at his time (and ours) expresses the contingent and mundane world in two ways: as a "prosaic objectivity" that captures the "mutability" of daily life or the "subjectivity of the artist" and her power of wit over every material (I:595). As contemporary art continues to grow more intimate with the finite world of human experience in and through such contingent expressions, we see two common orientations to art whose one-sided visions limit the experience of art. Those who rigidly define art and aim to police its boundaries could perhaps be called "gatekeepers." These are people whose perspective of art often reduces art to a limited set of forms, expressions, and contents they have arbitrarily deemed "beautiful." Those who think anything goes and that different things will please different people are what we might call "relativists," who see art not as a site of co-experience and co-definition, but a multitude of singular perspectives that do not affect one another and hence have no need to communicate about the possible meaning of an artwork. It only matters that I, as spectator or artist, like or made this artwork; its meaning is not to be found in other people's "opinions" other than my own and everybody has a right to their own meaning as long as it does not encroach upon mine.[50]

[50] I believe my use of the terms gatekeeper and relativist connect with Simone de Beauvoir's descriptions of the "Aesthetes of the West" and "quietists" in her essay "Right-Wing Thought Today." In there, de Beauvoir describes these two orientations toward art as outgrows of bourgeois thought. The "Aesthete of the West," like the gatekeeper, is a bourgeois person who "reproach this empirical world not only for its

These prejudices fail to capture what makes both past and present art significant because they either reduce external reality to one, strict, determinate appearance in which only specific people have access, or the mere esteem of creation that mutes the possibility of discovering what is significant in the work (i.e., other determinate perspectives of the world). It is for this reason that Hegel calls upon philosophy to reconcile these "artistic" worldviews in which we often find ourselves ensnared. As he argues,

> If general culture has run into such a contradiction [between external reality and ideas], it becomes the task of philosophy to supersede the oppositions, i.e. to show that neither the one alternative in its abstraction, nor the other in the like one-sidedness, possesses truth, but that they are both self-dissolving; that truth lies only in the reconciliation and mediation of both, and that this mediation is no mere demand, but what is absolutely accomplished and is ever self-accomplishing… Philosophy affords a reflective insight into the essence of the opposition only in so far as it shows how truth is just the dissolving of opposition and, at that, not in the sense, as may be supposed, that the opposition and its two sides *do not exist at all*, but that they exist reconciled (I:54-5).

While Hegel is here talking about a more general issue, I think it has relevance for this discussion: restricted views on art such as "gatekeeping" or "relativism," by being *perspectives*, are both standpoints that stem from subjectivity that fail to do justice to meaningful *intersubjectivity*. Both afford certain insights about subjectivity because they are taken up by some*one* acting through their subjective capacity to judge or create an artwork. However, subjectivity is not just a celebration of singularity and individuality; it is also the possibility of meaningful, intersubjective communication—the capacity to be impacted and transformed by others. By way of this one-sidedness, both prevent

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perishable character, but also its disorder and absurdity," replacing this chaos with an art that has "a well-ordered, significative universe" [Simone de Beauvoir, "Right-Wing Thought Today" in *Political Writings*, ed. Margaret A. Simmons and Marybeth Timmerman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2012), 158-59]. The "quietist," like the relativist, is a bourgeois person who refuses to judge whether an action or situation is good or bad, and rather "justifies injustice" by saying "it is necessary for his work" and that we ought to "let thus preserve this world as it is" (*ibid.*, 160-61).

subjectivity the possibility of wrestling with its vagabondage and its own developed perspective. That is, they prevent subjectivity from wandering to-and-fro in its attempts to understand the meaning of itself and the world in which it lives, either by guarding art's borders too tightly or by believing no borders exist at all (i.e., that each one is in identity with another; the mere neutralization of difference; the "agreement to disagree").

It is true that art does not express what is of ultimate significance in ways previously afforded to it in past artistic worlds. For us, there is no content or form that *must* be represented by art; no subject-matter or individual art will ever attain "purity" in the way Ancient Greek or Christian art could be interpreted as having.[51] Art is liberated and liberating; it presents itself to us in a way that destroys all restrictions on possible forms and content art can express in order to reveal "*Humanus* its new holy of holies" (I:607). We neither need to restrict access to the world of art in order for it to maintain its capacity for "making present" infinite subjectivity, nor ignore our determinate expressions of ourselves and the world in order for subjectivity to recognize its infinitude. *Art is always already a concern for a particular situation (i.e., an artwork).*[52] Our subjective capacity to engage with an artwork reveals that we both have a singular perspective of the work *and* that such a perspective implies other points of reference with which I could only learn by my participation with others looking at this work. As such, the one-sided perspectives of gatekeeping and relativism are reconciled, and

[51] "No content, no form, is any longer immediately identical with the inwardness, the nature, the unconscious substantial essence of the artist; every material may be indifferent to him if only it does not contradict the formal law of being simply beautiful and capable of artistic treatment. Today there is no material which stands in and for itself above this relativity, and even if one matter be raised above it, still there is at least no absolute need for its representation by *art*" (I:605).

[52] Said another way by art scholar William I. Fowkes, "Art… is equipped to show us particulars rather than subsume particulars under universals… Art provides us with a spectacle of singulars" (Fowkes, *A Hegelian Account of Contemporary Art,* 79).

contemporary art, unlike past forms of art, makes present this reconciliation by using it as its content and material and expressing it through the most contingent of subject-matters. Philosophy's task, at least in discussing art is to articulate how this reconciliation exists in and through such contingent artworks, or, as Hegel describes, "to comprehend in thought what this fullness of content and its beautiful mode of appearance are" (I:611). In other words, contemporary art is a playing with infinite subjectivity by use of any object, idea, and material that acknowledge both our specific histories and limitless ways of seeing beyond them, and philosophy discloses how these artworks achieve this double acknowledgement or miss it by rendering these artworks as appearances that point beyond their contingency toward the limitlessness of subjectivity, human experience. Discovered in and through the experience of art—especially contemporary art—as interpreted by Hegel, through the intimacy between our finite and infinite subjectivities, our being-at-home and vagabondage from it, is what I argue to be a *(w)hole*.

To encounter a (w)hole is to encounter both finitude and infinitude in their closest proximity—or rather, the way in which this specific artwork, in its particular individuality, points toward the ongoing commitment of subjectivity being determined differently—of recognizing its current understanding of its self and world as one-sided and inadequate. It is a way of playing with our subjective powers of being-at-home and vagabondage: art duplicates external reality in a way that allows us, as subjectivities, to encounter it as both part of our home *and* something that pushes us outside the borders of that home. A (w)hole offers up what often goes unnoticed about finite human experience to the space of intersubjectivity in a way that makes us concerned about our situations as such and our limitless abilities to redefine their meaning. It is an encounter with the

particularity of our world—our various "wholes" in which we are part—and a "hole" that allows us to notice how our worlds are never completely defined, that there is always an outside (another way of interpreting) to this "whole." Through this (w)hole, art becomes recognized as both the creative act and space of conversation between artist and public, an open space where all are invited to interpret how the work's form expresses its content.[53]

This "(w)hole" is a term I have borrowed and adapted from artist Luis Jacob's description of art as an experience of "groundlessness" or "reality itself experienced as a hole."[54] He describes the groundlessness of art as an experience of uncertainty, an open-ended decision, where one witnesses an artwork as an "image of Life in the process of being lived, of openness and profound ambiguity at the moment of making a decision" prior to any sort of givens.[55] Art as a hole is thus an experience of freedom, or rather, of a subjectivity whose meaning is never exhausted by the determinate expressions it has previously made. But we should not understand this groundlessness as some detached perspective. As Jacob describes:

> The experience [of groundlessness] does not render me into a free-floating existence without limits or conditions… There *are* indeed the facts of a situation to which I am bound, within which I must always choose one path and not another, in the context of influences and compulsions from others who share my point of view and others who challenge it, others who wish to thwart my efforts or others who invite me to collaboration. "Groundless" is the idea that, from the viewpoint of Life as I live it, the meaning of these facts of my situation and of my having taken this path instead of another—the significance of these things is never written in stone, and never ceases to be an open question.[56]

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[53] This space of conversation can also fall into one-sidedness. See Hegel's *Aesthetics II* 618-620, in which Hegel discusses the "pleasing style of art" and how such art can either become something too secretive or too flattering.
[54] Jacob, "Groundless in the Museum," 91
[55] *Ibid.*, 90
[56] *Ibid.*, 93

Art is thus a way of experiencing groundlessness in the sense that what is perceived as a ground, what we take for granted as merely objective, external realities is built upon interpretative decisions in which subjectivity has gained a perspective and yet experiences its limitless power to reinterpret, both for itself and with others. As Jacob concludes, "art reminds us that we can be at home in the hole, and nowhere else," meaning that to experience art is to experience reality as a place that is always already a co-experiencing and co-defining.[57] By adding the "w" in parenthesis in front of "hole," I am attempting to make clearer the experienced ambiguity that Jacob notices in aesthetic experience between being both a perspectival subjectivity and an interpreter of infinite subjectivity. Art as an experience of a (w)hole calls upon all to bear witness to being implicated within a history, a particular way in which "we" spring forth into the world, and also to being inexhaustible by our histories, capable of reinterpreting ourselves and being in situations that nevertheless remain an open-ended possibilities.

To be caught up in the experience of art as a (w)hole is to say that one's being is being-in-a-(w)hole. This is akin to Hegel's description of the "peculiar" situation of contemporary art and what is necessary for the artist to create art in the contemporary world: the "sensitive abandonment of the heart in the object" (I:606, 609). Through the deeper intimacy between subjectivity and external reality, Hegel notices an "objective humour," a sort of playing and manipulation of the art object that "remains a subjective spirited movement" that is done purposefully (I:609). The artist or spectator, ensnared by this object, feels a sort of slippage or vulnerability as if the inner movement of the object always seems to evade capture. And yet, even though it continues to wander off, the

[57] *Ibid.*, 95

object in and through which this vagabond subjectivity has made its brief home remains the artist or spectator's concern. As Hegel notes, "what is at stake is that the heart, with its depth of feeling, and the spirit and a rich consciousness shall be entirely absorbed in the circumstances, situation, etc., tarry there, and so make out of the object something new, beautiful, and intrinsically valuable" (I:610). Being-in-a-(w)hole is this feeling of vulnerability that concerns itself with its particular circumstances, and an artwork that presents itself as this vulnerable, finite perspective of its object will continue to remain a site for wandering subjectivities to make their home. If an artwork fails to be something vulnerable—to be a (w)hole—and made in a way that appeals to a "gatekeeper" or a "relativist," it loses itself as art. As Hegel points out, we are occupied with objects "so long as there is something secret, not revealed, in them. This is the case so long as the material is identical with the substance of our own being" (I:604). If the "substance" of our being is infinite subjectivity, then the artwork must continually call upon our power of interpretation (both in our singular capacity and our intersubjective capacity). To experience being-in-a-(w)hole, art must remain vulnerable. [58]

What Hegel offers to we who are discussing contemporary art is a rich account about ways in which artists[59] can succeed or fail in their attempts to engage with the art

[58] Gaston Bachelard makes similar remarks in his description and poetics of one's house in *The Poetics of Space*. For instance, he says "If a house is a living value, it must integrate an element of unreality. *All values must remain vulnerable, and those that do not are dead*" [Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press 1994), 59, emphasis mine). He also states that "one must live to build one's house, and not build one's house to live in" (pg. 106). What is at stake in art today is its vulnerability, or rather, its ability to remain an open-ended question that invites us to constantly re-interpret its meaning.

[59] In the last section of *Aesthetics* vol.1, Hegel focuses upon the artist and art in his discussion of "the standpoint from which art can pursue its activity" (I:595). However, for those of us who are not artists, we can take up this section in a way that allows us to better approach the art of our time in our own encounters. If we are to engage authentically with art and make judgements about it, we should keep these points in mind.

of our time. It is not certain whether the artwork will be significant; it *can* fail to remind us about our being-at-home in a (w)hole. But because the risk of death or failure exists, art *can* continue to live so long as this challenge is met authentically. Let us understand how to approach this authentic account of the artist by analyzing Hegel's analysis, "The End of the Romantic Form of Art," in the section "Individual Characteristics." This authenticity can be accounted for in three terms: wonder, being-at-home, and courage to wander.

The authentic artist is one who *wonders* about her world, the kind of material from which she will express something substantial, and what she will express. Wondering is our subjective capacity to put ourselves (or rather, our received understandings of ourselves and the world) at a distance from an object of experience. As Hegel states, wonder "occurs when man, torn free from his most immediate first connection with nature… stands back spiritually from nature and his own singularity and now seeks and sees in things a universal, implicit, and permanent element" (I:315). For Hegel, this wonder manifests itself as an inspiration in which the artist seeks to unite herself with her subject-matter and becomes "entirely absorbed in the object" (I:604). Being thus absorbed in understanding her object, the artist seeks to make present the way it speaks to her by expressing the many ways in which manifests itself in the world. Without this wonder, the artist will fail to make art's being "present in its integrity" and thus fail to make the artwork something significant (ibid.). In other words, without wonder, the artwork would remain singular because it would lack an ability to speak—would fail to disrupt other's received understandings of this object.

The authentic artist also needs to have a sense of being-at-home—that is, have a perspective from which she sees herself and the world. Hegel says to us that the authentic artist is one whose "great and free soul *must know and possess its own ground*, must be sure of itself and confident in itself" (I:606, emphasis mine). Given the depth of inner subjective life and the vastness of external reality, the artist has before her what seems to be an infinity of subject-matters and materials from which she can create a work of art. Indeed, since the artist is first one who wonders, her material and the subject-matter with which she attempts to unite has an outside, given that such objects do not solely stem from her imagination. However, if there is present to the artist an always escaping outside beyond what she wonders about, then there must also be a place in which the artist develops the skills to bring this infinitude to light. Place, however, does not occupy the artist now in the same way that it did in past world-views (e.g., classical art and the ancient Greek world). Instead of being a specific home in the world that is reconciled with externality, place is transformed into something from which the artist becomes able to launch herself into the openness of the world (I:604-5). Place must be allowed to impart to the artist a perspective but only insofar as it allows her the "free development of the spirit," or rather, allows her *to be at home* in the wanderings that lead her to engage with the outside (I:606).

Lastly, the authentic artist needs to have the *courage to wander* away from home—to allow the meaning she imparted it to drift so others may experience and share in the work's co-definition. She cannot simply rely upon what has already been done and simply give it a more "modern" twist; she is called to span out into new, uncertain territory that her artistic choices can best sensuously express while allowing herself the

space needed to let art go its own way. Nothing past will save the artist and make the artwork a (w)hole: she creates as if she is sure that she has the ability bring to light what is significant about her subject-matter even when she does not know it completely. She must give herself over to her object and engage a "fugitive notion" as noted above. To use Simone de Beauvoir's words, the courageous artist brings to life an artwork that, like the artist herself, reveals something significant because it has accepted its "lack of being" as something positive.[60] The artist therefore need not just wonder about her object and accept the ways in which it stands apart from her, but should also express it in a way that allows new meanings to emerge, meanings that she may never have considered and that others will give to it through their experiences of it. She must allow her art to venture out into the world as that which speaks for itself, and thus risk that it *can* fail to either speak or be heard. In other words, she must let her art leave the comfort and safety of home and become a vagabond. Insofar as she can, the artist can approach the limit of vagabond because she is a subjectivity that has the limitless power of redefining her situation. However, because she is always someone who has a perspective, she can only express such infinitude in a finite way. Her art, therefore, also remains perspectival; however, because this perspective is recognized in and through the work itself, it is open to the infinity of ways others make it determinable. The artist must let her work be free, to be an

[60] "The artist and the writer force themselves to surmount existence in another way. They attempt to realize it as an absolute. What makes their effort genuine is that they do not propose to attain being… It is existence which they are trying to pin down and make eternal. The word, the stroke, the very marble indicates the object insofar as it is an absence. Only, in the work of art the lack of being returns to the positive" [Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp, 1976), 69].

open-ended (w)hole, allowing other subjectivities to co-define the meaning of this uncertain decision.[61]

What contemporary art reveals as significant is this possibility of discovering a (w)hole. That is, contemporary art presents itself as a positive acceptance of its (w)hole in being and leaves it up to all of us to discover, like the artist, the significance of the subject-matter and its expression in a specific material. It does not seek to tell us what we are supposed to find, but rather allows itself and its significance to be found by first calling us to wonder about its reasons for being here, to be at home with our ability to wander into it and develop an interpretation, and the *courage* to express this interpretation of it with others; a sharing that always involves a further wandering by means of communication with others. Like a Socratic gadfly, contemporary art bites and prods us to ask questions of it in order for this work to reverberate as a shared human experience. We can always impose our own meaning upon the work. However, this imposition fails on two counts: one, this imposition dominates the discourse that a specific work makes present and so veils it; the second, once other people are considered, our imposed meaning slips away from us and reveals the (w)hole which we have tried to cover up.[62] By having this (w)hole of its being present, contemporary art makes it

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[61] My argument of letting an open-ended (w)hole to exist in an artwork follows close to what Martin Donougho's interpretation of Hegel. That is, that Hegel "follows a nonessentialist path discerning a series of distinctions of art/nonart, *in which something is always left over*, a content left unthematized by form" [Martin Donougho, "Art and History," *Hegel and the Arts*, ed. Stephen Houlgate (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 197, emphasis mine]. The contemporary artist, or contemporary art in general, leaves something left over so to allow itself to become a site for potential explorations of its meaning. An artwork that closes itself too tightly or is too lax in its position fails to account for what is left over: the communicative ways in which potentially learn to embrace the co-defining and co-experiencing of meaning.

[62] I have in mind Sartre's discussion of "The Look" in *Being and Nothingness*. As Sartre states, "the appearance of the Other in the world corresponds therefore to a fixed sliding of the whole universe, to a decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization which I am simultaneously effecting." He adds in regards to encountering the Other that "the world has a kind of drain hole in the middle of its being and that it is perpetually flowing off through this hole" [Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*,

possible for all in their own experience to discover the significant. It is in this discovering that our history, both in its particularity and universality, is felt through art, and gives us over into thinking about our "imperishable humanity" together.

3.2 Discovering the Aesthetic Experience of Being-in-the-(W)hole through Lygia Clark and Fred Wilson

Through Hegel we reach a point where art expresses what it means to be human; or rather, what it means to have a perspective and experience it as such. The life of art is balanced upon this moment: the subject (whether artist or spectator) always already finds herself at this decisive point where she could choose to see art as not requiring her abilities of interpretation and remain within a restricted, one-sided perspective, or discover something significant about art in and through the experience of being-in-a-(w)hole. Art therefore presents itself as a question posed to subjectivity. The profundity of a contemporary work like Auguste Rodin's sculpture "The Thinker" is that it presents this spirit of questioning quite like the "spiritual individualities" of the sculptures of the Ancient Greek gods.[63] Like the classical sculptors, Rodin did not pull this spirit and form from the sky; he discovered it already before him as what is significant about this world

trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press), 255-56]. Because art is apprehended by others, we can never contribute a completely fixed meaning to the work. A hole is always present, but never without the wholes that give it meaning.

[63] As Hegel says of sculpture, "the human form as an expression is given to the artist, but he does not just find it generalized" (II:715).

in which he felt called upon to create a generalized sculpted form. Yet, what was discovered was not merely the "objective" form of questioning (someone sitting, hunched over, hand to chin); it was also the limitless depth of questioning that he brought to life. His sculpture, when placed within museum entrances, thus gives us an orientation to what is before us; it both entices us to adopt a specific pathos within the museum (like that of classical sculptures within their specific settings) and to put into question not merely the artwork, but also both the rooms in which these works are juxtaposed and the museum itself. When we engage with art—especially that of contemporary art whose playful intimacy with contingency makes it possible for it to be passed over—we ought to do our best to approach it as vagabonds attempting to make ourselves at home, as beings-in-a-(w)hole.

It is in this spirit of questioning and discovering (w)holes through our concern with artworks that contemporary art, through its infinitude of possible expressions, reveals the limitless powers of subjectivity. Indeed, contemporary art is not necessarily concerned with merely putting before our eyes something to merely delight our fancies, whether by means of putting before us the ideas of art we have inherited or creating something that merely entertains. On the contrary, it is by adopting the attitude of being-in-the-(w)hole that contemporary art reveals the significant through its multitude of contingent shapes. What is at stake within contemporary art is therefore not the artworks as such, but, as Hegel notices, "imaginative occupation which is satisfied in the freest way with its hundreds of changing turns of phrase and conceits, and plays in the most ingenious manner with joy and sorrow alike" (I:610). Contemporary art delights itself by being an "inexhaustible self-yielding of imagination" and "harmless play" that invites

artist and spectator alike to discover with each other the infinitude of aesthetic experience (I:611). To help tease out what I believe Hegel to be noticing, I will turn to the artworks and writing of Lygia Clark and Fred Wilson to show how their artworks bring to light the imaginative play that *all* are called to witness.

3.2a. Lygia Clark's Trailings: Experience of the "Full-Void"

In one account of her "propositions" (the term Clark used to signify the "nonexistence" of the objects used in her art), Clark tells us that the role of the artist is "to give the participant an object that has no importance in itself and which will only take on such to the extent that the participant will act."[64] This fecund statement reveals a double movement: the spectator is gestured to become involved with the object in order for the art's meaning to be uncovered, and the artist, by allowing the spectator to truly interact with her work, recovers a sense of "fullness" or of being "grounded in the collective"—the artist *qua* artist "dies," or rather, strips away her title that had alienated her from the community.[65] This movement is discovered at the instant in which the spectator acts upon the object the artist has proposed. This object, according to Clark, cannot "count in and of itself" as a separate thing to be viewed; on the contrary, the object is a thing that must be transcended so that the "spectator-author" can recognize her own capacity to participate in the co-definition of meaning.[66] The aim of Lygia Clark's art is for the artist to disappear and for the everyday person to realize that she too has the power to create and can "achieve the singular condition of art, but without art."[67]

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[64] Lygia Clark, "Nostalgia of the Body," *MIT Press,* October, vol. 69 (Summer 1994), 101
[65] *Ibid.* 103, 102
[66] *Ibid.* 101
[67] *Ibid.* 102

Take for example her proposition, *Trailings*. Clark instructs the spectator to find a strip of paper and make it into a Möbius strip. Once this is done, the spectator takes a pair of scissors, pokes a hole on some point of the strip, and cuts throughout the length of it. Instead of making a complete cut across the strip, the spectator must decide for himself to cut either to the left or right of the one made previously. As this action is repeated, the Mobius strip becomes longer and the paper of which its composed gets thinner to the point where the spectator cannot cut any further. All that is left behind is an unraveled Möbius strip—there's nothing left for the object to reveal given that there is no further action to take. This is precisely what Clark wishes us to notice. The meaning of this work is not found in the art object; the possibility of its meaning is found by engaging in a dialogue with the object through our action upon it. As Clark recounts,

> Each *Trailing* is an immanent reality that reveals itself in its totality during the expressive tie of the spectator-author. At the outset, the *Trailing* is only a potentiality. *You* [emphasis mine] are going to form, you and it, a unique, total, existential reality. No more separation between subject and object. It's an embrace, a fusion. The responses, diverse as they are, will be born of your choices.[68]

Before and after any action upon the *Trailing*, Clark's proposition appears completely mundane. Only in the moments of action does the meaning reveal itself: no artistic object before or after, just the "singular condition of art." As Clark tells us, "there is *a single type of duration: the act.* The act is what produces the *Trailing*. There is *nothing before, nothing after*."[69] The object is not what is of ultimate significance; on the contrary, it is the act, the fusion, the realization of being someone who can reveal what is significant.

[68] *Ibid.*, 99
[69] *Ibid.*

The artist recedes to the background in order for all to discover their creative power, their being-in-the-(w)hole.

There is something quite musical about Clark's *Trailings* and other propositions. Just as we cannot grasp the meaning of a song without actively listening to it in time, we cannot glean anything from Clark's propositions unless we let ourselves participate with them. Even the everyday spacing of our everyday experiencing of art is transformed into something quite musical. Space, in Clark's propositions, does not have a predefined mapping that marks off where the spectator, artist, and art are supposed to be in relation to each other; rather, space transforms into "*time ceaselessly metamorphosed through action,*" a discovery of a "full-void" that "contains all potentialities" that is only revealed through the act.[70] The artist, spectator, and art-object fuse into one moment and realize the conditions for artistic experience *together*. Clark's work appeals directly to our finitude and our ability to express its infinite determinability, quite like how Hegel argues that music appeals directly to the soul. As he poignantly describes, music (as a work of art) "does not produce an object *persisting* in space but shows through its free unstable soaring that it is a communication which… is carried by the inner subjective life, and is to exist for that life alone" (II:891). Yet unlike music that affords the opportunity for one to hear without listening (e.g.- putting on music to study or write), it is *only* by allowing ourselves to be responsive to the whole proposition—to allow oneself to act and be concerned here—that we discover anything. "It's you who now give expression to my thoughts," Clark writes, "to draw from them whatever vital experience you want."[71] At a music performance, we are not invited to come onstage and play the instruments

[70] *Ibid.*, 104
[71] *Ibid.*, 105

ourselves; with Clark, we cannot be anywhere else but upon the stage discovering our aesthetic experience—our being-in-the-(w)hole.

It is no accident that Clark uses the term "full-void" as a description of the type of acts that occur in her propositions. We experience the fullness of life through this moment in which space becomes "a kind of time that *ceaselessly metamorphosed through action*"—that is, a moment in which our subjective capacity to act is recognized in the object it is acting upon—and "past, present, future, mix together."[72] Yet, through this act, *nothing* is made—one glimpses at the void that reveals the infinitude of human subjectivity. *Nothing* is revealed *here*; the spectator-author's act leads to a discovery of a "full-void" in which the potentiality for freedom is seen as the very condition of the enactment of our freedom at this moment. Although one may have cut the trailing in her own way the result is the same for each participant: a *nothing* whose result reveals the possibility of *our* freedom. Clark proposes to us that we wonder about what has been put before us, to have enough certainty of our subjectivity that we can reveal something of ultimate significance *here*, and the courage to encounter the fact that not one of us has the meaning of the object for ourselves, that this nothing is the condition of our (w)holes and reveals the possibility of freedom. "Everyone is creator," Clark eloquently tells us[73]. All are called to realize this "full-void."

3.2b. Fred Wilson's Mining the Museum: *Resonating History between Histories*

The average everydayness of our experience often reveals itself as a "perfect" correspondence between a form and a content: a bus stop signifies that a bus will arrive

[72] *Ibid.*, 104
[73] *Ibid.*, 105

here at some specified time; our alarm clock signifies through its sounding that it is time to wake up and get ready. This "perfect" correspondence can also be applied to how we approach our history: seeing an American flag as an American can signify to us that we are part of a "free" nation; a national monument like the Vietnam Veteran Memorial or the Lincoln Memorial can signify to us the overcoming of a struggle that we understand as something past and to be remembered as such. What we often take for granted in these experiences is how such understandings often veil the continuing struggle of freedom and the possibility of revealing new meanings and correspondences. Indeed, such experiences are *actually* particular: they reveal more or less the white American and capitalist perspective of history that either erases or covers over both the struggles which occur within the United States and those on the outside fighting against this paradigm. When these opposing histories are brought to light, they provide an interruption to the dominate ways of interacting with the world and help us discover a more open space that includes the voices that have been othered by such closed perspectives. Such an interruption that provides us with this possibility of discovering (w)holes is Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum.*

Mining the Museum is an exhibition at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore, Maryland that explores the use of space to pose questions and start a dialogue concerning the ways in which one particular history (specifically white, American history) veils and dominates over other existing histories occurring in the same place and time (African-American, Native-American/Indigenous histories, etc.). The exhibition takes place in four rooms, each with a specific color that signify a theme and historical artifacts that relate to those themes. Along with various projections, audio, and other

media, Wilson placed these artifacts (all found in the Historical Society's exhibits and reserves) in a way that juxtapose the dominate historical narrative with artifacts that signify the actual histories of African-Americans and Native-Americans during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These juxtapositions and themes create a context that are meant to make the audience *feel* and *see* the tension between these antagonistic histories and orient them toward questioning the ways we often organize and inhabit our public spaces.

For example, in the first room of the exhibit is a grey-colored room where one is greeted by the "Truth Trophy"—an industry award for truth in advertising—along with three busts of white historical figures from Maryland on its right, and empty, black pedestals with the names of Harriet Tubman, Benjamin Banneker, and Frederick Douglass. In the opposite section of the room are "Cigar-store Indians" whose faces are turned away from the audience and toward photos of actual Native Americans. Also included is the "Portrait of Henry Darnell" that prominently displays the wealthy European boy and his slave, also a child, who is wearing a dog collar. There is with it an audio recording that repeats "Am I your brother? Am I your friend? Am I your pet?" and a light that focuses upon the enslaved boy's collar.[74] This first room sets up the primary questions and contexts that Wilson wants us to consider when experiencing a museum. On the first wall, it should interest us that for a museum (especially one in Baltimore whose population is diverse) that has an award for telling the truth only makes present its European heritage and not its African-American heritage. The three figures named but not seen on the black pedestals are all figures who were born in Maryland; in fact, they

[74] Howard Halle and Fred Wilson, "Mining the Museum," *Grand Street*, No. 44 (1993), 151-172. Pictures for reference can be found in pgs. 153-156

had powerful historical impact within the United States. For instance, Harriet Tubman freed herself and others from slavery in Maryland, helped radical abolitionist John Brown recruit people for his attack upon Harper's Ferry, and was an important activist for the Suffragette movement: why would she be absent in a museum that is apparently dedicated to truth? On the second wall, it should interest us that this museum proudly displays "cigar-store Indians" while more or less veiling the history of actual Native Americans who lived in Maryland. This theme of erasure and making present the absent histories is brought to a focal point in the portrait that visibly shows both how Euro-centric history has dominated our understanding of museums and how other histories have been pushed to the margins. By including with this portrait an audio recording that questions the audience upon how they see marginalized communities and shining a light upon the slave, Wilson both calls into question the "truth" of the Historical Society's museum and shows us that other histories are always already present even when they are relegated to the margins.

The encountering of this context of tension can result in differentiated experiences. One could come away with a validated feeling because one's history is represented and the tension is there for all to see.[75] Another person might react against these kinds of juxtapositions in some manner, with anger, confusion, or disappointment, for instance, because this kind of tension is not often experienced in these places that are

[75] Such is the case with multiple docents who filled out questionnaires after the exhibit. As one docent who identifies as an African and Native American woman tells us: "I saw my history everywhere, not just in the photos. I wonder if white people can find their heritage in the exhibit? It is there" [Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum: An Instillation by Fred Wilson,* ed. Lisa G. Corrin (Baltimore: The Contemporary, 1994), 62]. Another, who identifies herself to be an African American woman, tells us in regard to the often unnoticed, Euro-centric ways in which museums are organized, how often we "passively accept the labels presented in museums." She says that she realized "how often [she] just expected to see the 'finer things' of life and how such objects are usually the only ones considered valid, valuable, and important" (*Ibid.,* 68).

typically geared to display a more Euro-centric worldview.[76] These differentiated experiences of the exhibit create a space where dialogue about this tension can occur. Indeed, as Wilson recounts, "if no dialogue arises, then to me the work is not so successful."[77] Some sort of interruption must take place in order for us to actually experience the way multiple histories allow a more holistic history to resonate within us. Indeed, there are two ways that Wilson stresses the recontextualizing of history within his work. The first, he tells us, is that he is *Mining* the Museum. That is, by changing the ways in which these historical artifacts are presented in the museum he is literally making the museum his own, not in the sense of ownership but by allowing these rooms and juxtapositions to display "different regions of [his] emotions and [his] identity, as well as different aspects of the world outside [himself]."[78] The museum is thus transformed in a way that reveals the histories that compose his identity, a welcoming place rather than a hostile one.[79] At the same time, Wilson is mining the *museum*; he is excavating *the* museum's way of revealing history by providing more contexts (juxtaposing histories) so to show us a "fuller" history. In this sense, we can compare his transformation of the museum to the "full-void" that Lygia Clark mentions in her *Nostalgia of the Body*:

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[76] One docent, identifying himself as a Caucasian man, writes that the exhibit "has the ability to promote *racism* and *hate* in young blacks, and was offensive to me!!!" (*Ibid.*, 61). Another docent, an American Jewish woman, writes that she "found *Mining the Museum* to be 'artsy' and pretentious," noting that "a museum should inspire interest and *answer* questions, not raise questions unrelated to the subject" (*Ibid.*, 69). What is interesting about these responses is how they tend to deny questioning its importance. The first does not want the question to be experienced at all, while the second uses it only as a means to get to an end. What they both seem to leave out is wonder: the first leaves out wonder because it questions the place in which one resides, while the other quickly sets it aside so that one "correct" answer is achieved (in other words, action as mere question, research, and answer).

[77] *Ibid.*, 33

[78] *Ibid.*

[79] As Wilson tells us, his first visit to the Maryland Historical Society made him feel alien. "One of the things, that drew me were all these 'American' things. Completely American. But why did I feel so completely alien? Why was I not interested in all these fabulous paintings and beautiful objects? Why did I just want to run out?" (*Ibid.*, 32).

Mining the Museum reveals a "full" sense of history by actively poking holes into the accepted accounts of history museums tend to display, revealing a void between the truth of history and the multiple ways in which history is experienced. Indeed, like Clark, Wilson *makes nothing*; he presents a hole in the dominant historical narrative of the museum, this hole being the refusal to display the complexities of history especially in regard to African-American history. As he tells us, "I am trying to root out that kind of denial. Museums are afraid of what they will bring up to the surface and how people will feel about certain issues that are long buried. They keep it buried, as if it doesn't exist, as though people aren't feeling these things anyway, instead of *opening* that sore and cleaning it out so it can heal."[80] By playing with the juxtaposition and correspondences of historical artifacts in a museum, Wilson allows us to discover in and through the art the ways we are in the world with others, both in terms of tension and in resolution. The possibility of discovery can only happen if we decide to, as Wilson describes, open the sore *here*.

[80] *Ibid.*, 34, emphasis mine.

Conclusion: Being-in-the-(W)hole-Together as the Experience of Dynamic Equality

I would like to take some time here to gather together the various arguments I have made regarding Hegel and where we stand now in relation to art. In Hegel's description of symbolic art, we are introduced to the character of wonder whose fascination with the object of experience allows questioning about the fact of experience as such to occur. In classical art, we meet the character of being-at-home or "substantial individuality" who creates and is created because she lives *here*, in this *place*, where ethical substance provides us with a comfortable home in which we are recognized as members. In romantic art, we witness the character of courage who ventures away from home in order to learn who she is, as a person with rights, in her infinite subjective capacity. However, there is a change in our relation to art once we meet this last character. Given that this subjective power has no pre-determined significance and thus is in principle *infinitely determinable*, the meanings and shapes that art can express are also brought into infinity: art has let its characters go free into the contingent world. The artist, through her mere will, can use any and every material and adopt any sort of genre or content that she believes to best express her vision. She can even choose to take up ossified accounts of Hegel's descriptions of art, say that art is *this* and only *this*, and thus reduce art to the "false position" of being put to ends like "instruction, purification, bettering, financial gain" and so on (I:55). Such a choice, however, would be taken without risk—without uncertainty and open-endedness— and thereby reduce subjectivity to some lower position in the universe that either always needs the assistance of an

"objective" power to correct its course or is forever lost upon the sea of contingency (i.e., in the form of nihilism). "Art" such as this has a tendency to develop hierarchies in the sense that they favor one way of experiencing art above others. As such, they fail to bring to life infinite subjectivity's powers of *co*-experiencing by reducing experience to only what is given.[81]

Yet, as expressed above, Hegel describes to us how art continues to be significant for us even when its expressions are that of finite human existence. This requires us, in our limitless capacities to create and witness, to bring together these characters of wonder, being-at-home, and courage into reconciliation—or, in other words, to gather them into a (w)hole. That is, although wonder and being-at-home are in some sense no longer possibilities for us, their integration with the modern understanding of subjectivity (one that is too individualistic, indifferent to context) make possible our recognizing the significance of passivity—subjectivity's receptivity to a meaning beyond itself and its indebtedness to culture for its perspective of itself and the world. The aesthetic experience of contemporary art, therefore, does not grant one singular perspective or interpretation the place of ultimate significance. Rather, it is the experience of multiple perspectives brought together before an artwork (a "specific here," a particular situation) who are engaged in the ongoing practice of co-defining that is given significance. Contemporary art does not try to merely *tell* us what we should do to understand art;

[81] An example of such a reductionist way of making "art" can be found within *The Brothers Karamazov*, specifically the character Rakitin and his poem for Mrs. Khokhlakov. Rather than letting the object show for and through itself what is significant, Rakitin inserts an "ideological message" within his poem that allows him to assume that it is good. If someone happens to disagree with the message or fails to see how the poem is as good as he asserts it to be, Rakitin can turn this other (who is attempting to experience the poem) into an "advocate for serfdom" who has never touched by progress simply on the basis of the other's interpretation. See Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Andrew MacAndrew (New York, NY: Bantam) 762-75 and 783-800.

rather, it *shows*[82] us how to attend to art so that the discovery of aesthetic experience can happen on its own accord.

This description allows us to better understand Hegel's characterization of contemporary art as "objective humor" (I:609) or "comedy" (II:1236), for this "showing" and discovery of aesthetic experience can only happen through breaking down the strict separation of art's characters through "harmless play." Indeed, in the concluding remarks of his lectures, Hegel elaborates upon this "harmless play" in an interesting way. He states:

> All art aims at the identity, produced by the spirit, in which eternal things, God, and absolute truth are revealed in real appearance and shape to our contemplation, to our hearts and minds. *But if comedy presents this unity only as its self-destruction* because the Absolute, which wants to realize itself, *sees its self-actualization destroyed by interests that have now become explicitly free in the real world and are directed only on what is accidental and subjective*, then the presence and agency of the Absolute no longer appears positively unified with the characters and aims of the real world but *asserts itself only in the negative form of cancelling everything not correspondent with it*, and subjective personality alone shows itself self-confident and self-assured at the same time in this dissolution (1236, emphases mine).

I argue that this passage should be understood as follows: Art, as a "spiritual" or infinite product, is meant to be an expression of who "we," as both objective and infinite subjectivities, are. For those living in today's world, Hegel tells us (indirectly) that the content of our art is "imperishable humanity in its many-sided significance and endless all-around development" (I:608). The situation of the contemporary world has given way to letting art's "interests" (art's characters, as elaborated above) go free and direct themselves toward mere finite ends, thus bringing art as close as it can to the contingent

[82] By "shows" I mean something broader than seeing. Lygia Clark "shows" us how we attend to art not through the faculty of seeing but rather through touch. As such, I believe "shows" can incorporate a multitude of sense faculties.

world. As such, these contingent objects with which subjectivity has become intimate are not adequate by themselves to reveal what is "absolute." Rather, the "absolute" is asserted as always beyond these objects, and these objects are only meant to be possible places where the "absolute" can make a brief appearance. To do this, these artworks call upon us to take what we have learned about the history of art and, instead of approaching as modern individuals, allow them to resonate—to communicate—to us about the ways we understand ourselves and the world in which we live. That is, contemporary artworks do not and can no longer insist that they in themselves express the absolute, and their focus on finite subjectivity allows them to instead become both a "celebration of the sensuous as such"[83] *and* a site where the communication of meaning is what is significant, not simply the artworks themselves. If this is the case, then contemporary art, as "comedy" or "objective humor," presents "unity" or what is *whole* as art's "self-destruction," in the sense that what is significant in art is the way an artwork allows subjectivity to recognize its infinite power to define its situation, not merely the artwork itself. Art today makes present the cancelation of a strict separation between art's established characters by propelling their experience of each other and by being a *hole* through which they must continuously reconcile. Contemporary art makes present its decision made in uncertainty so as to bring all of us together within a situation of dynamic equality—this shared situation of being-in-a-(w)hole-together. The authentic artist or spectator is therefore a being whose being is "being-in-the-(w)hole"—a being who tries to situate the whole by allowing it to be present as that which is always already

[83] Fowkes, *A Hegelian Account of Contemporary Art*, 80. Although Fowkes interprets this celebration as going against the Hegelian schema, I believe I have interpreted Hegel in this work in a way that shows it fits quite nicely. Indeed, such a "celebration of the sensuous" is how we give ourselves over to the work so to learn about who we are and who we could be.

in a hole, and the artwork is the situation of a (w)hole in which everybody in its presence finds themselves at home.

This "being-in-the-(w)hole-together" is what I believe Clark and Wilson are hinting at in their respective works as either "full-void" or "the opening of the sore." That is, what these artists attempt to reveal is how our situation is always already predicated upon an interpretation that itself does not exhaust subjective experience and as such is always open to other interpretations. Contemporary art calls upon us to notice this (w)hole together, to discover our "imperishable humanity" in a way that leaves open the kind of specific experience each one of us might have with it so to begin a dialogue about it. Art no longer needs to carry out a completely objective act (it does not need to be strictly tied to a place or produce clearly distinguished art objects); it only appeals to an "inner movement of the spirit" leaving it up to us to discover what is necessary about it together (I:609). [84] Indeed, through this aesthetic experience of the (w)hole in contemporary art, the word "discovery" is able to reveal itself as having both passive and active meanings. In the passive sense, discovery indicates a recovery of an action's relation to the world. For example, we say "I did not realize I had an accent" when talking to someone with a different dialect, or "I did not know my country committed these egregious acts of war" when encountering a war-torn region. In the active sense, discovery indicates an uncovering that is actively seeking to answer something. When we are puzzled or looking for the meaning for something of which we do not know, we engage in acts that allow us to delve deeper into the topic. In the first sense we encounter

[84] As Hegel says about "*objective* humor," the kind of intimacy between artist and objective "can only be partial and can perhaps be expressed only within the compass of a song or only as part of a greater whole. For if it were extended and carried through within objectivity, it would necessarily become action and even and an objective presentation of these" (I:609).

our connection or communion with the world in some way, while in the second sense we recognize a distance from the world. Discovery *qua* discovery is therefore the recovery of "wholeness" through the constant uncovering or renewal of distance (or rather, a hole). Contemporary art plays in this (w)hole of discovery: art calls for a recovery of humanity's creative potential and togetherness by being something that, as Hegel says above, "asserts itself only in the negative form of cancelling everything not correspondent to it" (II:1236). For Clark, we discover the (w)hole through the creative act of the spectator-author upon a proposed-object of the artist that disappears into nothing. That is, there is *nothing* but the act in which the boundaries of art-object, artist, and spectator are negated in order to provide a sense of wholeness *here*. For Wilson, we discover the (w)hole through the witnessing of histories that have been literally marginalized through the juxtaposition and recontextualization of historical artifacts. He gives us a fuller account of history by bringing to the foreground a tension that marginalized people experience everyday (especially at museums) and that white people rarely notice.

The discovery of being-in-the-(w)hole-together through the experience of contemporary art as a situation of dynamic equality has some interesting consequences. One such consequence is that we become better able to put our political situations into question. That is, because being-in-the-(w)hole-together opens up a space of dynamic equality for all concerned with the interpretation of an artwork, we develop a habit for self-criticism in other spheres of co-experience, like that of our political life. By allowing us to feel both wholeness and distance (community and individuality), we develop through the aesthetic experience of contemporary art a better capacity for sharing and

encountering interpretations with other subjectivities. This sort of co-experiencing provides us with the critical tools to ask of our governments, workplaces, and other organized areas of existence if they are staying committed to an open-ended space where *all* members can continuously participate in the shaping of such spheres. Just as how an artwork is always open to *anyone's* interpretation, political life must also be open to any and all voices of those that live within its district.

Yet, as the word "members" indicates, being-in-the-(w)hole-together does have boundaries. Indeed, it is these boundaries that provide tension found in the (w)hole. "Membership" in a community of the (w)hole is limited to those who are concerned with the artwork or organization that composes the boundaries. One example of the openness and limits of being-in-the-(w)hole-together could be found in climatology. Within the boundaries of its study are those who are both directly and indirectly concerned with ways we understand climate, such as experts in biology, ethics, astronomy, and those who live or work in areas of concern, such as farmers, pilots, indigenous communities, and so on. Whether in agreement or in conflict, climatology remains an open-ended (w)hole in the sense that, for those concerned, there is always in question the interpretations of this phenomenon, especially when considering new evidence. However, climatology is not open to those not actually concerned with the object in question. Or rather, though poor interpretations of the field do exist and point toward something like a study in climate, these interpretations can be ignored or dismissed because their concern is not with the object of discussion. Instead, these "interpretations" tend to be an explanation of their own closed perspectives. These can be the chatter of talk-show radio hosts, opinion writers, certain politicians, conspiracy theorists, and even those who claim

expertise in the field but refuse new evidence, whether from a lab or in the world. Being-in-the-(w)hole-together thus requires us to be vigilant. It requires a commitment to the open-ended, ongoing process of interpretation that neither seeks to close off newer perspectives nor too open to allow relativistic and closed perspectives to enter.

Dynamic equality is therefore an ongoing project of being-in-the-(w)hole-together that always runs the risk of wandering away completely. The possibility of dynamic equality's realization is "present" so long as the sites in which we encounter (w)holes continue to concern our intersubjective powers of co-experiencing and co-definition. Indeed, these sites are always open to change, in the sense that we might discover new sites that replace older ones, that our old sites develop new meanings. As Hegel tells us at the end of his lectures, "when the link forged between us generally and in relation to our common aim has been broken, 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 forever" (II:1237). Although the sites where we encounter (w)holes can be veiled, it is our commitment to the open-endedness of our subjectivity that continues the ongoing possibility of realizing the dynamic equality we share as part of this imperishable humanity.

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