

Francesca Iannelli | Klaus Vieweg (Hg. / Eds.)

Hegel und die Herausforderungen
unserer Zeit / Facing the challenges
of our time with Hegel



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Hegel und die Herausforderungen unserer Zeit /
Facing the challenges of our time with Hegel

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UND ZUR FRÜHROMANTIK

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Hegel und die Herausforderungen unserer Zeit / Facing the challenges of our time with Hegel



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Mit Unterstützung des Departements für Philosophie, Kommunikation und Performing Arts der Universität Roma Tre (Italien) und im Rahmen der Projekte *Hegelian Constellations of the Feminine: a hyper-archive for an inclusive Bildung* (2023–2025) und *Hegel Now!*



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Einleitung

Unsere Zeit in Hegels Gedanken erfasst

Francesca Iannelli, Klaus Vieweg

Es ist zu hoffen, „daß die Überzeugung allgemeiner werde, daß eine philosophische Erkenntnis solcher Gegenstände nicht aus dem Rasonement, aus Zwecken, Gründen und Nützlichkeiten, noch viel weniger aus dem Gemüt, der Liebe und der Begeisterung, sondern allein aus dem Begriffe hervorgehen könne.“¹

Mit den in diesem Band versammelten Aufsätzen wollen wir über die wachsende Präsenz der Hegelschen Philosophie in unserer Zeit nachdenken, die auch durch die Entdeckung unveröffentlichter Quellen durch Klaus Vieweg im Sommer 2022 in der Bibliothek der Erzdiözese München und Freising befördert wurde, 5.000 Manuskriptseiten, die das philosophische Denken Hegels in der Heidelberger Zeit (1816–1818) dokumentieren.²

Diese Entdeckung hat dazu beigetragen, dass Hegels Philosophie und ihr theoretischer Reichtum wieder mehr ins Zentrum der Diskussion gerückt wird, nicht nur unter Fachleuten, sondern auch für eine breitere Öffentlichkeit. Der vorliegende Band widmet sich unter Rückgriff auf Kerngedanken der Hegelschen Philosophie brennenden intellektuellen Herausforderungen unserer Zeit in den verschiedensten Bereichen: von der Logik bis zur Rechtsphilosophie, von der Ästhetik bis zur Ökologie und versucht die Aktualität Hegels argumentativ zu belegen. Die Kontexte, in denen die Gedanken, Prinzipien und Paradigmen der Hegelschen Philosophie produktiv werden können, sind vielfältig und entscheidend für ein angemessenes Verständnis der heutigen Zeit. Zum Beispiel der komplexe Diskurs über die Menschenrechte, der immer wieder – zwischen Verletzungen und Verweigerungen – dramatisch ins Zentrum der zeitgenössischen Debatte zurückkehrt, um in politischer und historischer Hinsicht diskutiert zu werden, aber selten in philosophischer Hinsicht und noch weniger mit Bezug auf Hegel. Von erheblicher Relevanz sind Überlegungen zur modernen Logik bei Hegel, zum modernen Staatsverständnis, der Bedeutung

1 G.W.F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. by Klaus Grotzsch / Elisabeth Weisser-Lohmann, in *GW* 9, vol. 14,1; Hamburg: Meiner, 2009, S. 224.

2 Vgl. Klaus Vieweg, Christian Illies, Francesca Iannelli und Marko Fuchs, *Wissenschaft der Freyheit – Heidelberger Hegel-Nachschriften von F. W. Carové*, in *Hegel-Studien*, 57, S. 151–157.

Hegels für die politische Philosophie überhaupt, sowie zu Hegels Fundierung von natürlicher und sozialer Nachhaltigkeit.

Ebenso können die neuen Herausforderungen, welche die Künstliche Intelligenz (KI) in den verschiedensten Bereichen mit sich bringt, durch einen Vergleich mit der Hegelschen Philosophie beurteilt werden, ein Philosophieren, das stets auf die wissenschaftlichen und künstlerischen Entwicklungen seiner Zeit geachtet hat, in denen unsere ambivalente, dissonante Gegenwart ihre Wurzeln hat.

Auch die umstrittene These vom Ende der Kunst, die Ströme von Tinte und eine nicht zu Ende gehende Debatte ausgelöst hat³, kann als Garantie für die freie Kunst und als Voraussetzung für die Entstehung der Institution Museum im Europa des späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhunderts, zu der Hegel selbst mit seinen berühmten Berliner Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik einen großen Beitrag geleistet hat, neu gelesen und aktualisiert werden.

Wir hoffen, dass dieser Band dazu beiträgt, den Hegels Idee eines philosophischen Universalismus zu stärken und dadurch jeden politischen und theoretischen Extremismus und Fundamentalismus sowie die kulturelle Einseitigkeit zu bekämpfen und dabei die grundlegende Bedeutung eines weltbürgerlich-globalistischen Konzepts der Freiheit zu beweisen. Dabei gilt es inakzeptable, ideologisch belastete Positionen des sogenannten *Cancel Culture* zurückzuweisen, im Sinne von Slavoj Žižek: „die einzige Zivilisation, die eine systematische Bewegung gestartet hat, um die Sklaverei zu verbieten, war der Westen. Und selbst die, die Europa kritisieren, tun dies dank der Konzepte, die die europäische Aufklärung und der Protestantismus hervorgebracht haben. Lasst uns also diesen europäischen Masochismus beenden. Wir sollten Europa heute verteidigen. Bei aller notwendigen Selbstkritik sollten wir wieder stolz auf unser europäisches Erbe sein.“⁴ Zu diesem Erbe gehört ohne Zweifel auch Hegels Denken.

Es werden gewichtige Argumente geliefert, um Hegel als den bedeutendsten philosophischen Denker der Moderne zu verstehen sowie die Unverzichtbarkeit eines für den im 21. Jahrhundert anstehenden *Hegelian Turn* in der Philosophie zu zeigen.

3 Dazu mehr in K. Vieweg, F. Iannelli, F. Vercellone (Hrsg.), *Das Ende der Kunst als Anfang freier Kunst*, Wilhlem Fink, München, 2015 sowie in A. L. Siani, *Hegel and the Present of Art's Past Character*, Routledge, Abingdon-New York, 2024.

4 Vgl. Die ZEIT Online. Interview mit Slavoj Žižek, 20. Oktober 2023.

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Die Realisierung dieses Bandes wurde möglich durch die Unterstützung des Departements für Philosophie, Kommunikation und Performing Arts der Universität Roma Tre (Italien) und des Projekts PRIN 20224KFTLP *Hegelian Constellations of the Feminine: a hyper-archive for an inclusive Bildung* (2023–2025), funded by the Italian Ministry for University and Research. Darüber hinaus möchten wir Prof. Luca Maria Scarantino (Präsident der *International Federation of Philosophical Societies*) und dem wissenschaftlichen Komitee der XXV. Weltkongresses der Philosophie “Philosophy across Boundaries” (Rom, 1.–8. August 2024), für ihre Bereitschaft danken, der Diskussion der innovativen Ergebnisse des Bandes, ein Panel *Hegel und die Herausforderungen unserer Zeit – Facing the challenges of our time with Hegel* zu widmen. Besonderer Dank geht auch an Herrn Paul Mikat (Jena) für seine redaktionelle Mitarbeit an diesem Band, sowie an Dr. Chiara Magni (Universität Roma Tre/Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne) und Dr. Gabriele Schimmenti (Universität Roma Tre) für das Korrekturlesen einiger Aufsätze.

Francesca Iannelli und Klaus Vieweg
Rom und Jena, Januar 2024

Introduction

Our Time understood through Hegel's Thought

Francesca Iannelli, Klaus Vieweg

We can only hope, “this surfeit will be effective in producing the general conviction that philosophical knowledge of such topics [as the state, constitution, art, etc.] cannot arise from argumentation, reasons, and calculations of purpose and utility, still less from the heart, love, and inspiration, but only from the concept.”¹

With the essays collected in this volume, we want to reflect on the growing presence of Hegel's philosophy in our time, which was also promoted by the discovery of unpublished sources by Klaus Vieweg in the summer of 2022 in the library of the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising, namely 5,000 manuscript pages documenting Hegel's philosophical thought in the Heidelberg period (1816–1818).²

This discovery has helped to bring Hegel's philosophy and its theoretical richness back to the center of discussion, not only among experts but also for a broader public. Drawing on core ideas of Hegel's philosophy, this volume is devoted to the burning intellectual challenges of our time in a wide variety of areas: from logic to the philosophy of law, from aesthetics to ecology, and attempts to provide argumentative evidence of Hegel's topicality. The contexts in which the ideas, principles and paradigms of Hegel's philosophy can become productive are diverse and crucial for an adequate understanding of the present day. For example, the complex discourse on human rights, which time and again – between violations and denials – dramatically returns to the center of contemporary debate to be discussed in political and historical terms, but rarely in philosophical terms and even less with reference to Hegel. Considerations of modern logic in Hegel, the modern understanding of the state, Hegel's significance for political philosophy in general, and Hegel's foundation of natural and social sustainability are of considerable relevance.

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 256–257, §272 Anm.

² See Klaus Vieweg, Christian Illies, Francesca Iannelli and Marko Fuchs, *Wissenschaft der Freyheit – Heidelberger Hegel-Nachschriften von F. W. Carové*, in *Hegel-Studien*, 57, pp. 151–157.

Likewise, the new challenges presented by artificial intelligence in a wide variety of areas can be assessed by comparing them with Hegelian philosophy, a philosophy that has always paid attention to the scientific and artistic developments of its time, in which our ambivalent, dissonant present has its roots.

The controversial thesis of the end of art, which has triggered streams of ink and a never-ending debate,³ can also be re-read and updated as a guarantee for free art and as a prerequisite for the emergence of the institution of the museum in late 18th and early 19th century Europe, to which Hegel himself made a major contribution with his famous Berlin Lectures on Aesthetics.

We hope that this volume will help to strengthen Hegel's idea of philosophical universalism and thereby combat all political and theoretical extremism and fundamentalism as well as cultural one-sidedness, thereby proving the fundamental importance of a cosmopolitan-globalist concept of freedom. In doing so, it is necessary to reject unacceptable, ideologically charged positions of so-called cancel culture, in the spirit of Slavoj Žižek: "the only civilization that launched a systematic movement to ban slavery was the West. And even those who criticize Europe do so thanks to the concepts produced by the European Enlightenment and Protestantism. So let's put an end to this European masochism. We should defend Europe today. Despite all the necessary self-criticism, we should once again be proud of our European heritage".⁴ This heritage undoubtedly includes Hegel's thinking.

Weighty arguments are here provided to understand Hegel as the most important philosophical thinker of modernity and to show the indispensability of a Hegelian turn in Philosophy in the 21st century.

3 More on this in K. Vieweg, F. Iannelli, F. Vercellone (eds.), *Das Ende der Kunst als Anfang freier Kunst*, Wilhlem Fink, Munich, 2015 and in A. L. Siani, *Hegel and the Present of Art's Past Character*, Routledge, Abingdon-New York, 2024.

4 See Die ZEIT Online. Interview mit Slavoj Žižek, 20th October 2023.

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The realization of this volume was made possible by the support of the Department of Philosophy, Communication and Performing Arts of the University of Roma Tre (Italy) and the project PRIN 20224KFTLP “Hegelian Constellations of the Feminine: a hyper-archive for an inclusive Bildung” (2023–2025), funded by the Italian Ministry for University and Research. Furthermore, we would like to thank Prof. Luca Maria Scarantino (President of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies) and the Scientific Committee of the XXV World Congress of Philosophy “Philosophy across Boundaries” (Rome, August 1–8, 2024), for their willingness to dedicate a panel to the discussion of the innovative results of the volume “Hegel und die Herausforderungen unserer Zeit – Facing the challenges of our time with Hegel”.

Special thanks also go to Paul Mikat (Jena University), Chiara Magni (Roma Tre University/ Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne) and Gabriele Schimmenti (Roma Tre University) for their precious help in the editorial revision of this volume.

Francesca Iannelli and Klaus Vieweg
Rome and Jena, January 2024

Aesthetics and Robotics

Empathy, Duplication, and Recognition in Hegel

Francesca Iannelli

1. Introduction: A Shining Star and a Darkened Constellation

Everything has been said about Hegel, or almost everything. Romantic and mystical, conservative and revolutionary, sexist and emancipatory¹, reactionary metaphysician and visionary prophet, radical enlightener and radical anti-enlightener, freemason and plebeian². What label is still missing from this already so diverse constellation, if not that of the empathic? In truth, this too has already been discussed! First and foremost by Wilhelm Perpeet in a 1966 essay titled *Historisches und Systematisches zur Einfühlungsästhetik*, in which the author identified in Hegel – and not in any other philosopher of German Romanticism – the “unfreiwilligen Paten” (involuntary godfather) of the theories of *Einfühlung* (empathy)³. More recently, Bernadette Collenberg-Plotnikov claimed that Hegel’s treatment of art in his Lectures on Aesthetics, while speculative and philosophical, was not always measured and restrained, but led to a transgression of aesthetic boundaries to the point of enlivening the work of art⁴.

* This paper contains a revised version of some theses I presented at the VIII International Symposium on Classical German Philosophy (Buenos Aires, November 10–11, 2022), organized by Héctor Ferreiro and Giovanna Miolli.

1 On this double consideration of the Hegelian legacy, see the discussion of some brilliant feminist scholars such as Kimberly Hutchings, Tuija Pulkkinen, *Hegel’s Philosophy and Feminist Thought: Beyond Antigone?*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 as well as the volume *The Owl’s Flight: Hegel’s Legacy to Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. by Stefania Achella/Francesca Iannelli/Gabriella Baptist/Serena Feloj/Fiorinda Li Vigni/Claudia Melica, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2021.

2 See Jacques D’Hont, *Hegel secret: recherches sur les sources cachées de la pensée de Hegel*, Paris: PUF 1968, pp. 257–262. Domenico Losurdo, *Hegel e la libertà dei moderni*, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1992, p. 192.

3 Edmund Ernst Wilhelm Perpeet, “Historisches und Systematisches zur Einfühlungsästhetik”, in: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, XI/2, 1966, pp. 193–216, here p. 204.

4 Bernadette Collenberg-Plotnikov, *Kunstrezeption in der Krise. Hegels Überlegungen zum Streit der Kenner und Emphatiker* in: Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert/Bernadette Collenberg-Plotnikov/ Elisabeth Weisser-Lohmann (eds.), *Kunst als Kulturgut*, vol. III, *Musealisierung und Reflexion*, München: Fink, 2011, pp. 205–223, here p. 216. As the author makes clear, the

The suggestions regarding an empathic Hegel, however, have not subsequently been taken up or adequately contextualized. It will therefore be the task of this paper to illuminate a partially obscured constellation – ranging from Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) to Robert Vischer (1847–1933) – and to make visible, with Hegel, a shining star behind the gloomy clouds of stereotypes.

In fact, one usually lets the history of empathy begin in 1873 with the publication of *Über das optische Formgefühl* (*On the Optical Sense of Form*), in which Robert Vischer introduces the term *Einfühlung* (empathy) as the ability to project oneself into the manifold forms of nature, to anthropomorphize animals, to duplicate oneself in other human beings, and to bring to life that which has no life. The most fertile ground for the dissemination of empathy is thus above all the realm of art: “Thus every work of art reveals itself to us as a person harmoniously feeling himself into a kindred object, or as humanity objectifying itself in harmonious forms”⁵, until in some cases it becomes our duplication or even our alter ego, because, as Vischer junior writes, “where there is no life, precisely there, do I miss it”⁶. Even these brief lines are enough to imagine the impact Vischer’s essay had on the history of culture, psychology, and art, both immediately and especially in the future, as he “anticipated the lessons of painting and sculpture that would emerge in the next generation”⁷ and was greatly appreciated by these younger generations and the artists of the avant-garde of the early 20th century. Vischer’s seminal essay would indeed inspire further reflection on empathy and psychological aesthetics by some of the brilliant theorists of the day, from Johannes Volkelt to Theodor Lipps, and help Robert Vischer achieve a fame and notoriety that, at the age of only 25, made him the acknowledged “father” of a much-discussed theory⁸ that is once again in vogue today, thanks to neuroscience and the discovery of mirror neurons,

recipient relates to the work of art either with ‘enthusiasm and empathy’ or with ‘schooling and historical knowledge’. Both approaches have their importance, but cannot be absolutized, as they would remain incomplete. See Collenberg-Plotnikov, p. 210.

5 Robert Vischer, *Ueber das optische Formgefühl: ein Beitrag zur Aesthetik*. Credner: Leipzig, 1873; en. translation *On the optical sense of form: a contribution to Aesthetics* [1873], in: Harry Francis Mallgrave/Eleftherios Ikonomou (eds.), *Empathy, form, and space: problems in German aesthetics, 1873–1893*, publ. by the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 89–123, here p. 117.

6 Ivi, p. 104.

7 Barasch Moshe, “Robert Vischer”, in: *Modern Theories of Art 2: From Impressionism to Kandinsky*, New York: New York University Press, 1998, pp. 99–108, here p. 101.

8 For wider contextualization, see Francesca Iannelli, “Robert Vischer and the Aesthetic Foundation of *Einfühlung*”, in Cristián Hernández Maturana et al. (ed.), *Forgotten Streams in the History of 19th Century German Psychology*, New York: Springer, 2024, vol. 2, in press.

but also to virtual reality and digital art, which have dramatically increased the desire to “enter” the image, as the existence of the metaverse with its parallel art world clearly testifies.

It should be borne in mind, however, that in tracing the changeable, fragmentary narration of a “prehistory” of the successful concept of “empathy” the name of Hegel, except for Wilhelm Perpeet, does not usually appear anywhere, not even by accident. There are some attempts to trace references to empathy in antiquity or the Middle Ages⁹, but in general modernity is regarded as its most fruitful epoch and Herder as its pioneer. He uses the term *hineinfühlen* in the 1778 essay *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele* to express the ability to feel ourselves in the other¹⁰.

Kant’s philosophy also seems to be permeated and shaken by a considerable “rumor of empathy”¹¹. First in the *Critique of Judgment*, where Kant speaks of *sensus communis* as a sense common to all, of a capacity to judge by putting oneself in the place of any other¹², and finally in the 1795 essay *On Perpetual Peace*, where he says that where on earth human rights are threatened, all humanity suffers: “The growing prevalence of a (narrower or wider) community among the people of the earth has now reached a point at which the violation of right at any *one* place on the earth is felt in *all* places”.¹³

Hegel, on the other hand, remains quite simply extrinsic to this narration. This is because his philosophy (of art) has for centuries been considered the systematic and metaphysical construction *par excellence*, and also because Hegel himself does not see aesthetics as a science of sensation and feeling at all. However, as we shall see, this does not mean that he did not approach – from youth to maturity – emotionally and personally the aesthetic reception of the

9 See i.e., Karl F. Morrison/Rudolph M. Bell (eds.), *Studies on Medieval Empathies*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.

10 Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele* [1778]; en. translation, *On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul*, in Michael N. Forster (ed.), *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 187–244.

11 Lou Agosta, *A Rumor of Empathy, Rewriting Empathy in the Context of Philosophy*, London: Palgrave, 2014, pp. 31–52.

12 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in: Id., *Akademie-Ausgabe*, Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin 1908–1913, Bd. 5, § 40, p. 171; en. translation, *Critique of Judgment*, tr. by Werner S. Pluhar, Cambridge: Hackett, 1987, pp. 159–162.

13 Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf*, in: Id., *Akademie-Ausgabe*, Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin 1923, vol. 8, p. 360; en. translation, *Toward Perpetual Peace. A Philosophical Sketch*. In: *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History* by Immanuel Kant, ed. by Pauline Kleingeld, New York: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 87.

works of art he loved most, nor that he excluded from his Berlin lectures what he called empty sentimentality¹⁴; namely any form of reception that projects itself into the beautiful and into the art thus touched, whether speculative or practical. As is well known, Hegel not only persistently engaged with the aesthetic world of thought, but he was also an insatiable lover of art: his numerous art journeys through Europe, which took him from Munich to Vienna, from Brussels to Paris, and the musical evenings he attended with enthusiasm, the musical Thursdays of Anton Friedrich Thibaut's *Singverein* in Heidelberg, the Berlin evenings at Mendelssohn's house, where he heard the musical talents of Fanny and Felix, but also at his own home, where he, for example, heard the German composer, pianist, poet and activist Johanna Kinkel (1810–1858) who played Chopin's *Nocturnes*¹⁵.

It would appear highly contradictory for an “art-addicted” philosopher like Hegel to have proclaimed the final end or death of art¹⁶ when he missed no

14 As is well known, Hegel is very critical of an anti-scientific and ecstatic approach in the *Phenomenology*, so it is not surprising that he did not theorize an empathetic aesthetics of being native in his maturity. It is enough to recall this passage from Preface: “Das Schöne, Heilige, Ewige, die Religion und Liebe sind der Köder, der gefodert wird, um die Lust zum Anbeissen zu erwecken, nicht der Begriff, sondern die Ekstase, nicht die kalt fortschreitende Nothwendigkeit der Sache, sondern die gährende Begeisterung soll die Haltung und fortleitende Ausbreitung des Reichthums der Substanz seyn.” (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* [1807], In: *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 9, ed. by Wolfgang Bonsiepen/Reinhard Heede, Hamburg: Meiner, 1980, p. 13); en. translation: “The beautiful, the holy, the eternal, religion, and love itself are all the bait required to awaken the craving to bite. What is supposed to sustain and extend the wealth of that substance is not the concept, but ecstasy, not the cold forward march of the necessity of the subject matter, but instead a kind of inflamed inspiration.” (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. by Terry Pinkard, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, p. 7). In recent years, however, there has been a significant increase in research dealing with the sphere of feeling in Hegel's philosophy; see for an overview Caterina Maurer, *La razionalità del sentire. Gefühl e Vernunft nella Filosofia dello spirito soggettivo di Hegel*, Verifiche, 2021. See also Andreas Arndt, *Zur Rolle des Gefühls in Hegels Theorie des subjektiven Geistes*, in: Jure Zovko & Andreas Arndt (eds.), *Hegels Anthropologie*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 75–88.

15 Klaus Vieweg, Hegel. *Der Philosoph der Freiheit*, Munich, Beck, 2019, p. 553.

16 As many Hegel interpreters, from Croce (see *Asthetik als Wissenschaft des Ausdrucks und allgemeine Linguistik. Theorie und Geschichte*, Leipzig: E. A. Scemann, 1905, p. 293), through Danto to Henrich, have argued. More about the controversial thesis of the end of art in *Das Ende der Kunst als Anfang freier Kunst*, ed. by Klaus Vieweg, Francesca Iannelli, Federico Vercellone, Munich: Fink 2015. Francesco Campana, *The End of Literature, Hegel, and the Contemporary Novel* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. For a more detailed contextualization, cf. my essay, “Dem Ende widerstehen. Zu einer Ästhetik des Widerstands bei Hegel”, in: *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, 2022, ed. by Myriam Gerhard, Brady Bowmann and Jure Zovko, 2025 (in press).

opportunity to attend musical events, visit, admire and enjoy museums and private collections (from the Boisserée to Lyversberg Collection, from Schiefer to Wallraf Collection, etc.), theaters and salons in Germany and abroad. The result would be a total separation between philosophy and life, which first of all would not be in accordance with the motto *durch Philosophie leben lernen*¹⁷ (“learning to live through philosophy”) to which Hegel adhered in his life, but also not with the intention found in *Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus*, (as a continuation and correction of the Enlightenment project)¹⁸ to make philosophy “practical” through an ethical-aesthetic synergy. It would also contradict that need for concreteness that distinguishes Hegelian Idealism from any empty abstraction¹⁹ and that “can be extended and resignified in non-Hegelian contexts”²⁰. Although some interpreters, such as Losurdo, hold that there “seems to be no relation” between the private and the philosophical dimension²¹, it is Hegel himself who emphasizes to his students of the *Philosophy of Right* of 1819/20: “Die Identität des Innern und Äussern ist das Wichtigste” (“The identity of the inner and the outer is the most important thing”)²².

Obviously, the art he considered in his Heidelberg and Berlin lectures has undergone various *Auflösungen* (dissolutions): it is now secularized, inventoried and catalogued (such as in the case of the Solly Collection²³), close to musealization, investigated by new generations of art historians guided by increasingly less intuitive and more and more philological criteria (like

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- 17 Manfred Baum/Kurt Meist, *Durch Philosophie leben lernen. Hegels Konzeption der Philosophie nach den neu aufgefundenen Jenaer Manuskripten*. In: Hegel-Studien, 12 (1977).
 - 18 See my *Understanding, radicalizing and illuminating the Enlightenment: Hegel use of “Lumières” and “Aufklärung*, in: Elisabeth Décultot/Nicholas Cronk (eds.), *Inventions of Enlightenment since 1800*, Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment, 2023, pp. 57–78.
 - 19 Hegel’s idealistic philosophy always implies a ‘concretere’ with its determinations and thus a concreteness, see Paolo Giuspoli, *Idealismo e concretezza. Il paradigma epistemico hegeliano*, Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2013, p. 14.
 - 20 So Giovanna Miolli, “Composting Contemporary Metaphilosophy with Feminist Philosophical Perspectives: Towards an Account of Philosophy’s Concreteness”, In: *Feminist Metaphilosophy*, No. 2 (2021), pp. 209–240, here p. 219.
 - 21 Domenico Losurdo, *Hegel e la libertà dei moderni*, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1992, p. 21.
 - 22 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts I, Wintersemester 1819/20. Nachschrift Johann Rudolf Ringier mit Varianten aus der Nachschrift Anonymus (Bloomington) und Varianten aus der Nachschrift Johann Rudolf Ringier*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 26.1, ed. by Dirk Felgenhau, Hamburg: Meiner, 2013, pp. 331–590, here p. 397 [*Variantenapparat (Bloomington)*].
 - 23 Robert Skwirblies (ed.), *Die Sammlung Solly 1821–2021: Vom “Bilder-Chaos” zur Gemäldegalerie*, München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2021.

Waagen), admired by refined connoisseurs and experts (like Hirt and von Rumohr). Art considered by Hegel and thus wrested from the immediacy of life and from the service of religious worship is not for this reason “finished;” on the contrary, it is precisely in this process of institutional and scientific valorization that it receives new life and freedom, as we shall see in this paper.

2. Empathy, Duplication, and Aesthetic Reception

In his famous Berlin Lectures on Aesthetics, Hegel always considered art from a philosophical-speculative point of view, but without disregarding empathic echoes, a fact that needs special attention. In a passage of the 1820–1821 Lecture, for example, Hegel states (in a virtual dialogue with Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*) that there is no strangeness whatsoever between the recipient and the beauty. Thus, already in Hegel, as later in Vischer, the beautiful is a kind of alter ego of the recipient: “thus the beautiful is nothing alien to me. I relate to the beautiful, but not as to another, but to my own, my being. Therein lies the freedom of the subject and object.”²⁴

In aesthetic reception, the subject is free from ordinary needs and thus also frees the object that is normally – as if it were a humble servant – at his service. In aesthetic reception, then, there are no longer servants or masters, but freedom, symmetry, fusion, and a certain familiarity and intimacy between subject and object. The purpose is in fact in the aesthetic object itself²⁵; or rather the beautiful is the purpose, and therefore there is no strangeness between the user and the object because the aesthetic object is a realized concept, namely truth, and this is the essence of the recipient itself.

For this reason, Hegel can claim that beauty and truth are the same and that aesthetics and logic imply each other:

“[...] the idea exists only as truth and beauty, which are then in so far one. The beautiful is the true in external existence, in sensuous presentation [*in sinnlicher Vorstellung*], but in such a way that this sensuous presentation [*sinnliche Vorstellung*] is held by its soul, that the differences are not independent. [...] with the beautiful, however, the truth also appears in the externality [*Äußerlichkeit*].”²⁶

24 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I*, Wintersemester 1820/21 – Nachschrift Wilhelm von Ascheberg und Willem Sax van Terborg, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 28.1, ed. by Niklas Hebing, Hamburg: Meiner, 2015, p. 27; my translation.

25 See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I* [1820/21], p. 10.

26 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I* [1820/21], p. 10; my translation.

Likewise, in the Berlin Lecture on Aesthetics of 1823, one senses a certain tenderness for the things of the world that some Hegel scholars mentioned²⁷, but which they completely exclude in relation to Hegel's conception of nature and the sublime.

In fact, Hegel distinguishes three perspectives: that of desire, typical of the ordinary human being who devours objects; that of science, that is, of the philosopher who ignores them; and finally, that of the artist and the empathic recipient who protects them. While starved and destructive desire does not consume reality without a certain bulimia, the artistic perspective (with Kant) is disinterested and leaves the objects free, while instead science, aiming at the universal, bypasses and transcends them, considering the particular only in terms of the universal.

This "sensitivity" toward aesthetic objects is attested not only in the manuscripts of the Berlin Listeners, but especially in the numerous letters Hegel addressed to his wife Marie von Tucher when he was traveling and taking every opportunity to enjoy myriad works of art. The letters show an intimate, private Hegel exchanging artistic impressions, feelings, and memories with his beloved wife, which resurface in the Berlin lectures on aesthetics in an analytically filtered manner, but which continue to have an emotional appeal. We need only recall what Hegel writes from Brussels to his wife on October 3, 1822. He had been briefly in Cologne, where he was able to admire in the Wallraf Collection²⁸, first at night²⁹ and later in daylight³⁰, a triptych by Joos van Cleve the Elder, which at the time was still erroneously attributed to Jan von Scorel. It was the *Death of Mary* (Fig. 6.1).

This "marvelous Dying Madonna"³¹ as Hegel calls her, shall be our case study and accompany us on the first part of our search for an empathic Hegel. Let us begin with the description of the central image (Fig 6.1), in which the moments before the death of the Virgin Mary are reproduced: Before our eyes, the bare-foot apostles crowd around the red-velvet four-poster bed in which Mary is lying, bedded on white pillows. The atmosphere seems quite agitated. The

27 I.e., Remo Bodei, "Tenerezza per le cose del mondo: sublime, sproporzione e contraddizione in Kant e Hegel", in: Valerio Verra (ed.), *Hegel interprete di Kant*, Napoli: Prismi 1996, pp. 179–218, here p. 215.

28 On this collection see Krzysztof Pomian, "Lenoir, Wallraf, Correr", in: Andreas Blühm/Anja Ebert (eds.), *Welt – Bild – Museum, Topographien der Kreativität*, Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau 2011, pp. 229–242.

29 Hegel, *Briefe*, ed. by Hoffmeister, Johannes, 4 vols. Hamburg: Meiner, 1952, vol. II, p. 353; en. translation (1984): *The Letters*. Clark Butler/Christiane Seiler (Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p. 586.

30 Hegel, *Briefe II*, 354; *Letters*, p. 596.

31 Hegel, *Briefe II*, 353; *Letters*, p. 586.



Fig. 6.1 Joos van Cleve, *The Death of Mary*, c. 1515, oil on oak; central panel 65 × 125.5 cm, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum Cologne & Fondation Corboud.
Source: Web Gallery of Art
Additional information: https://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/c/cleve/joos/death_w.html

apostles pray, weep, handle the thurible, carry holy water around the Virgin's deathbed. John, weeping, helps the dying woman to hold the candle in his hands and does not even have the strength to look at it. Peter in the chasuble leads the blessing rites that accompany her departure. The rosary lying on the stool in the foreground reminds us of the importance of prayer, as the motif of Mary's death is obviously intended to give the viewer comfort at the thought of his own death. At the same time, the sumptuous furnishings of the chamber allow us to travel back in time, virtually transporting us to rooms as they might have been in the home of a wealthy Cologne resident at the beginning of the 16th century, given the affluence of the donor family immortalized on the side wings of the triptych.

Hegel and his wife had already had the opportunity to contemplate this intense farewell scene to the Virgin Mary together during their time in Heidelberg (1816–1818), albeit in a different and more impressive version in the Boisserée collection, which they liked very much (Fig. 6.2). This is evident from the correspondence, and is confirmed by the philosopher's enthusiasm, when in 1827 he received some lithographs by Johann Nepomuk Strixner after works in the Boisserée collection³², including one of this masterpiece depicting the dying Mary.

32 Irmgard Feldhaus, *Die Lithographien Johann Nepomuk Strixners*, in: Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert/Bernadette Collenberg-Plotnikov/Elisabeth Weisser-Lohmann (eds.), *Kunst als Kulturgut*, vol. III, *Musealisierung und Reflexion*, München: Fink, 2011, pp. 233–262.



Fig. 6.2 Joos van Cleve, *Altar of the Death of the Virgin Mary*. c. 1515–1523. Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen – Alte Pinakothek Munich. 1827 from the Boisserée Collection.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

Additional information: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Death_of_Mary_Joos_van_Cleve_the_Elder_W.A.F._150,_151,_152,_Alte_Pinakothek_Munich.jpg#filelinks

The triptych by van Cleve in the Boisserée Collection in Heidelberg (Fig. 6.2) thus also masterfully staged a spiritual lesson on the “good death” that presupposes the Church’s instruments of salvation and grace. This, however, is not the reason that could explain the attentive and precise iconic internalization that went on in Hegel during the Heidelberg years and that later led to the immediate recognition of the work’s artistic authorship in a similar version in Wallraf’s possession.

Such sensitivity to painting on Hegel’s part should therefore not be interpreted merely as an example of “art connoisseurship,” but rather of intimate and empathetic reception. In fact, Hegel does not wait to discuss it directly with his wife Marie upon his return but writes to her immediately that he recognized the donors Nicasius and Georg Hackeney with Christina Hardenrath (Nicasius’s second wife) and Sybilla Hackeney, his stepdaughter, with their respective patron saints on the side wings of the Cologne triptych (Fig. 6.3a/6.3b) and that they “were completely familiar” to him. He also remembers that the picture was always so loved by his wife³³.

33 Hegel, *Briefe II*, 354; *Letters*, p. 596.



Fig. 6.3a / Fig. 6.3b Joos van Cleve, *Exterior: Saints Sebastian and Rochus, with Nicasius and Georg Hackeney*; *Saints Christina and Gudula with Christina and Sibilla Hackeney*, c. 1515–1523. Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen – Alte Pinakothek Munich. 1827 from the Boisseree Collection.

By recognizing the donors on the triptych of the Wallraf Collection, whom he affectionately calls “völlig alte Bekannte” [‘completely old acquaintances’, my translation], as if they were (almost) real, independent persons with whom he had had contact in the past, Hegel unintentionally provides us with important indications for our reconstruction of a constellation of empathy that had fallen into obscurity: in the first place, this image must have held a special secret in his eyes, since he usually dedicated little space in his Lectures to the description of masterpieces, even if they were far better known works of universal Art History. Moreover, the empathetic tone in the letters he wrote to his wife from Cologne (28.09.1822) and Brussels (03.10.1822) is a sign that he was not only an attentive observer, but that he was also in the habit of communicating the feelings and emotions that the aesthetic reception aroused in him (as evidenced by many enthusiastic letters to his wife, especially from Vienna).

Incidentally, a very similar tone is struck by another theorist from the “pre-history” of empathy; namely, the oft-forgotten Friedrich Theodor Vischer, who confesses to his readers in his essay *Eine Reise* (1860) that he had a special relationship (“an old love affair”) with some figures, even marginal ones, with whom he entered into an ever closer empathic relationship on each trip to Italy, as if they were real figures awaiting him there. He tells, for example, of his admiration for a girl painted by Titian in the Pala Pesaro in the church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, which he could hardly wait to see again each time he returned to Venice. What so impressed Friedrich Theodor Vischer, who was an *Augenmensch*³⁴, must have been the girl’s intense gaze, which seemed to transcend the material limitations of the canvas to reach the viewer. Vischer remarks with slight irony:

“Admittedly, it must be confessed that the relationship suffers from a considerable defect, namely immense age difference: the girl is about thirteen, at the most fourteen years old; this would balance out to some extent if I could take into account the 350 years that have elapsed since Titian brought the good child here to this church.”³⁵

In fact, this is an astonishing confusion, because the painting, the Pala di Pesaro, created by Titian between 1519 and 1526, shows the Madonna and Child, Saints Anthony of Padua and Peter, and other members of the Pesaro family, including the young kneeling Leonardo, who has his face turned toward the viewer. The fine features Titian gave him must have misled Vischer into thinking he was a girl. However, this does not detract from the intimate, empathic relationship with the depictions. The same can be observed not only in Hegel, but is also echoed in some contemporary aesthetic theories, especially by Horst Bredekamp, which in recent years have emphasized the power that comes from images and their status as “quasi-subjects”.

In the volume *Theorie des Bildakts* (“Theory of the Image Act”), published in Germany in 2010, Bredekamp boldly defended the autonomy and vitality of artworks and supported his thesis with a broad digression that reaches far back, namely to the “speaking works” of various kinds – including brooches, cups, weapons, funerary sculptures, paintings, and much more – that have addressed the viewer since antiquity with the help of inscriptions and receive

34 On this feature see my *Friedrich Theodor Vischer und Italien: Die erlebte Ästhetik eines Augenmenschen*, Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2016.

35 Friedrich Theodor Vischer, *Eine Reise*. Cotta: Stuttgart, 1860; reprinted in: Robert Vischer, (ed.): *Kritische Gänge*, vol. 1, second enlarged edition. München: Meyer & Jessen, 1922, pp. 309–450, here p. 402, my translation.



Fig. 6.4
Tiziano, Pala Pesaro, Basilica di Santa
Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice.

new life through each act of reading³⁶. This would mean, then, that it was not only the *tableaux vivants* or, later in the eighteenth century, the automata that sought to abolish any distance between artifact and humanity. The overcoming of the boundary between the vital and the inorganic would take place in the reception of any work containing *enérghēia* and spirit, in a way that would allow the recipient to find himself in the iconic alterity.

To return, then, to Hegel's letter from Brussels to his wife: Had Hegel wanted to provide a mere example of art erudition, he might have clarified that the composition of the central panel with the death of Mary was based on a model by Hugo van der Goes, or he might have told his wife the tangled history, with which he was surely familiar, of the triptych in the Wallraf Collection, which Nicasius Hackney had commissioned in 1515 as an altar for the private chapel of his house in Cologne, and which was sold around 1809 by his distant heirs (or rather by Frau von Schlossberg) to his friends Melchior and Sulpiz Boisserée. The latter, however, regarded the 1515 triptych as a preliminary study

36 On "speaking artworks" see Horts Bredekamp, *Theorie des Bildakts*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010, pp. 67–108.

for the more valuable “Hauptwerk” (Fig. 6.2), completed only a few years later, which they hoped to add to their collection. In 1810, therefore, they exchanged with Wallraf, who received the previous smaller version (Fig. 6.1) of the *Death of Mary* and 19 other paintings. The first owner of the suggestive triptych so beloved by Hegel and his wife was therefore Wallraf himself, who had received it in 1802 from the former Collegiate Church of St. Mary in the Capitol of Cologne, to which it had originally been donated by the Hackney family.

In truth, however, it seems that it was not the tangled history of the two versions of van Cleve’s *Death of Mary* that interested Hegel, but something else. Hegel had already spoken about the Dying Mary (Fig. 6.2), which was kept in the Boisserée collection in Heidelberg, to his Berlin listeners at the 1820–1821 Lecture on aesthetics; that is, even before he saw the second version in the Wallraf collection in Cologne. Thus, van Cleve’s work must have seemed important to him more for the resonances and stimuli it evoked in him than for the variants, the anecdotes, or for its author’s role in European art history. Indeed, since it was a work erroneously attributed to Jan van Scorel, one might think that Hegel cited it because of the authority of its author. However, it can hardly be emphasized often enough that Hegel was quite reticent about mentioning by name or giving praise to well-known artists in his *Aesthetics*.

Rather, in his Berlin Lectures on Aesthetics, Hegel explicitly insists that the work of art must address us, that it must speak to us, that we must feel “native” to it. We must be able to “enter”, as Friedrich Theodor Vischer was able to do in the case of the Pala Pesaro in the Basilica of the Frari or in Titian’s *Assunta*. As Vischer makes clear in his last successful essay, *Das Symbol* (1887), in which the ageing philosopher adopted his son Robert’s theory of empathy, the modern recipient, son of a secularized society, can poetically and symbolically empathize even with contents far removed from his scale of values. Thus, we recipients identify ourselves, believer or not, in front of the *Assunta* with those poor disciples who stop barefoot and with their noses raised: “the lagging looking disciples are us, are our longing from the heavy earth bands” (my translation)³⁷.

This empathic and projective capacity of reception certainly applies to Hegel himself when he describes to his students the triptych by Joos van Cleve the Elder from the Boisserée collection depicting the dying Mary:

“Here I can mention one painting of the dying Mary that Mr. Boisserée owns. A difficult task. She lies dying on a bed, her friends around her with the sacred rituals and utensils necessary for deaths. The various persons and the accessories are

37 Friedrich Theodor Vischer, *Das Symbol*. In: Philosophische Aufsätze. E. Zeller gewidmet. Leipzig: Bues, 1887; reprinted in: Robert Vischer (ed.), *Kritische Gänge*, Bd. 4, zweite vermehrte Auflage. München: Meyer & Jessen, 1922, pp. 420–546, hier p. 428.

of the highest beauty. Those who have seen somnambulists, beautiful, feminine, soulful figures, where the soul is still active in itself and has rigidly left the body, have been reminded of this sight when viewing the dying Mary. In her, there is not the growing weary, collapsing in death, but one still sees the soul becoming free, returning to itself.”³⁸

In the Berlin lecture of 1820–1821, then, it was Hegel himself who abruptly transferred his listeners, and with them us readers, from the artistic to the experiential level when he presented a rather unusual comparison; namely between the dying Mary and the experience we can have of female figures dying, on whose beautiful countenances are imprinted expressions reminiscent of somnambulism. To whom is Hegel alluding here? Who are “those who have seen somnambulists, beautiful, feminine, soulful figures”? Is Hegel perhaps referring to one of the anecdotes about Friedrich Schlegel and Frau Christine von Stransky, as Pöggeler suggests?³⁹ Or is he here interweaving aesthetic-artistic emotions shared with his wife Marie with traumatic personal memories? The doubt arises that in describing the masterpiece from the Boisserée collection to his Berlin audience, Hegel felt so “native” to this deathbed that he was reliving something much more intimate than the memory of an iconic work of art, perhaps even the traumatic death of his mother Maria Magdalena Louisa Fromm (September 20, 1783), which he witnessed at the age of only 13, along with his sister and the rest of the family, at the time of the bilious fever in Stuttgart that also afflicted himself. We know that Hegel was rather reticent when it came to traumas of his life, and that he often preferred silence, as Pinkard makes clear⁴⁰. However, it is not impossible that some of his aesthetic-philosophical reflections represent a sort of self-therapy or memory of the repressed, since in the 1820–1821 Lecture on Aesthetics, in which Hegel mentions the triptych of the dying Mary, he also insists on the concreteness of the figure of Mary as an emblem of any earthly mother, including his own. This youthful trauma can hardly be overestimated, since it had immediate consequences for the young

38 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I* [1820/21], p. 167; my translation.

39 Otto Pöggeler, *Hegel und die Geburt des Museums*, in: Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert/Bernadette Collenberg-Plotnikov/Elisabeth Weisser-Lohmann (eds.): *Kunst als Kulturgut*, Vol. I, *Die Sammlung Boisserée*, München: Fink, 2011, pp. 301–315, here p. 309. Über Schlegels Freundschaft mit Christine von Stransky cf. Tim Porzer, *Briefe für die Seele. Der Brief als Therapeutikum am Beispiel der Briefe Friedrich Schlegels an Christine von Stransky*, Gdańsk, 2021, Nr. 44, pp. 126–138.

40 I.e. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 319.

Hegel's health⁴¹ and left "seelische[n] Narben," as Vieweg defines them⁴². Moreover, even in the Berlin years; that is, at the height of his fame, Hegel, together with his sister Christiane, cherished the memory of their beloved mother, to whom they owed their introduction to education. It is also noteworthy that by a strange coincidence the dates of birth and death of mother and son coincided, since Hegel's death anniversary (14.11.1831) coincided with the day on which the mother would have celebrated her 90th birthday had she still been alive, a circumstance that caused great anxiety and anguish to Christiane, who by then was suffering from psychotic disorders.

With his Berlin students, Hegel therefore gradually moves from the description of images, which is actually very rare in the Lectures – since the philosophy of art must remain scientifically anchored to concepts (GW 28, 1, 164) – to an empathic experience through duplication. He impresses upon his listeners: "In that an object is beautiful to me, the contemplation of this beautiful is the contemplation of the realized concept, of truth, which is also *my* essence."⁴³

Moreover, as Hegel emphasizes in the Berlin Lecture on Aesthetics of 1820–1821, separation is overcome in aesthetic experience: "There is indeed an object there, but this negativity of separateness is abolished; we recognize ourselves in it."⁴⁴ The viewer projects himself into the artwork and overcomes any distance: "In the work of art one gets to know the nature of man"⁴⁵. Accordingly, the work of art has its own (quasi-)subjectivity, (quasi-)autonomy, and (quasi-)alterity. Empathic projection thus enables us to fill precisely these gaps caused by the "quasi" and helps us to achieve a perfect experience of duplication, as Hegel masterfully describes it in the 1823 Lecture on the Philosophy of Art:

"The preeminent question is: why does a human being produce a work of art? [...] Natural things just *are*, they are just onefold, just simply exist. Yet as consciousness, human beings double themselves; they simply *are*, and then are *for themselves*. They bring for themselves what they are, intuiting themselves, standing before themselves and are consciousness of themselves. They simply bring before themselves what they are. So the universal need for the work of art is to

41 "Hegel developed a kind of speech impediment, and the underlying reason may well have had to do with his mother's death, his own survival, and some antagonism between himself and his father, although these are virtually impossible to ferret out." Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography*, p. 3.

42 Vieweg, *Hegel. Der Philosoph der Freiheit*, Munich: Beck, 2019, p. 37.

43 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I* [1820/21], p. 27; my translation.

44 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I* [1820/21], p. 30; my translation.

45 Karol Libelt, *Aesthetik nach Prof. Hegel im Wintersemester 1828–29*, Krakow, Jagellonian Library, manuscript p. 135; my translation.

be sought in a human being's thought, since for the human being the work of art is a way of bringing before oneself what one is."⁴⁶

Thus, man gets to know himself in the aesthetic reception, but strictly speaking he does not recognize himself, because even if the empathy of the recipient fills with life what has no life, the work of art – as “quasi-subjectivity” – does not possess the resistance and negativity that only the alterity of an authentic subjectivity can guarantee. What is meant or cannot be meant by this, we will see in more detail in the second part of our paper.

3. Empathy, Recognition and Robotics

At this point, a question arises: What would Hegel say if the work of art were made, as it is today, by a humanoid? In the meantime, this possibility, which was hardly imaginable a few years ago, has become reality, as Ai-Da makes clear: It is a robotic artist with silicone skin, designed by a team of English and Spanish scientists, that participated in the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022. Ai-Da's resume is short, but very respectable! This cyborg painter made her first drawings at the University of Oxford in 2019 and her first self-portrait in 2021. Despite her short career, she has already exhibited some works at the Design Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and participated in “Forever Is Now”, the first contemporary art exhibition at the Pyramids of Giza. We are obviously dealing with the first prototypes of a kind of hyper-artist with an algorithmic heart, for whom each painting is finished before it is painted⁴⁷.

Now one has to ask: Are we really witnessing an upcoming “struggle between artists and robots,” as Yuk Hui fears⁴⁸, or is it a dystopian delusion? Can Ai-Da's works also be for us “question, address, echo for our minds”⁴⁹ or can they, as productions of a (quasi-)alterity, offer only fleeting and “interesting” suggestions destined to be devoured by the next novelty in the sense of Friedrich

46 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I, Sommersemester 1823 – Nachschrift Heinrich Gustav Hotho. Mit den Marginalien zweier Überarbeitungsstufen und mit Varianten aus der Nachschrift Carl Kromayr*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 28.1, ed. by Niklas Hebing, Hamburg: Meiner, 2015, p. 229; en. translation, *Lectures on the philosophy of art. The Hotho transcript of the 1823 Berlin lectures*, ed. by Robert F. Brown, together with an Introduction by Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 192–193.

47 Yuk Hui, *Art and Cosmotechnics*, Minneapolis: e-flux, 2021, p. 215.

48 Yuk Hui, *Art and Cosmotechnics*, p. 219.

49 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst I*, p. 10; my translation.

Schlegel⁵⁰? Would Hegel – or better, as Žižek says, a “latter-day Hegel”⁵¹ – have dismissed them as blind, mindless works, or would he have finally set out on a journey to Venice in the *Bel Paese*? We will return to this question at the conclusion of our paper.

First, however, let us recall that Hegel, as an open and insatiable lover of art, was not afraid of the basic experience of total immersion, as he did in Paris in 1827, where he was among the visitors to the first Neorama, conceived of by the brothers Jean-Francois (1783–1858) and Jean Alaux (1786–1864): namely a kind of panorama drawn on a cylindrical surface, depicting the interior of a building that seems alive because of the presence of figures. Hegel writes to the family thus:

“While you in Berlin have been working on a house for [Karl Gropius’s] Diorama for a half-year, the Parisians have long gone beyond that [i.e., beyond the original Diorama designed by Louis Daguerre, opened in Paris in 1822]. The newest thing is the Neorama, very beautiful, quite perfected.”⁵²

In the Neorama by the Alaux brothers exhibited in Paris, it was now possible to admire the interior of St. Peter’s Basilica; Hegel was thus able to experience, at least virtually, the atmosphere that prevailed in the most beautiful building in the world, as defined by Winckelmann, who called the basilica the “Schönheitsideal der Architektur”⁵³ (ideal of beauty in architecture). After his stay in Paris in 1827, Hegel’s boyhood dream of traveling to Italy finally dissipated, as is evident from his correspondence with his beloved wife Marie, particularly a passage in a letter of October 7, 1827, in which Hegel recounts a sensational experience in the Neorama that he considers so much a “substitute” for a real experience that he decides he no longer needs to travel to Italy.

The trip to Paris thus appears to him as an auspicious substitute that made it possible for him to bury the youthful project he once shared with his friend Schelling. Now Hegel felt liberated and wrote that he no longer “need” to visit the Eternal City, which, incidentally, was not only the cradle of art but also the seat of Catholicism. Having admired it thanks to the Neorama’s new technologies and with a little imagination, Hegel was able to avoid the discomfort that would come to him from the omnipresence of Catholic priests in the Eternal

50 I refer to Schlegel’s reflections on the emerging category of “interesting” exposed in the essay “On the study of Greek poetry” (*Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie*, 1797).

51 Slavoj Žižek, *Hegel in a Wired Brain*. London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020, p. 21.

52 Hegel, *Briefe III*, p. 199; *Letters*, p. 661.

53 Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Abhandlung von der Fähigkeit der Empfindung des Schönen in der Kunst*, in Helmut Holtzhauer (ed.), *Winckelmanns Werke in einem Band*, Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1969, pp. 138–165, here p. 139.

City, as he wrote to his beloved wife: “Now I do not need to travel to Rome to see this basilica and the Pope with his cardinals and so on worshipping St. Peter on their knees.”⁵⁴

Hegel thus proved to be anything but limited, biased, or caught up in the traditional reception of classical beauty; on the contrary, he was drawn to every artistic expression, even the most innovative proto-technological aesthetic experiences his time could offer. This goes so far as to assert, in a passage from the 1826 Lectures on Aesthetics, that art performs a compensatory function for the inevitable gaps and deficiencies of our existence, however rich.⁵⁵

Given the growing contamination of aesthetics, film, and neuroscience, we would like to propound a thought experiment in which we will imagine Hegel in the cinema. On view is an apparently German film from 2021, *Ich bin dein Mensch*, directed by Maria Schrader and set in Berlin in the not-too-distant future. The protagonist is Alma (Maren Eggert), a brilliant archaeologist who works at the Pergamon Museum, not far from where the Hegels once lived, and is quite entranced by an ambitious research project with distinctly empathic resonances, with which she hopes to trace echoes of a poetic sensibility in the ancient tablets of the Sumerian era. Her lonely life is sentimentally shaken by a quasi-alterity, not of a work of art, but of a robot, or rather of Tom, her masculine ideal, which appears in the form of an android partner whom Alma tests against her will for three weeks in order to then write a report. In it, she is to comment on the advantages and disadvantages of humans and robots living together, on the recognition – in a Germany of the future – of civil rights, the right to marry and the right to divorce for androids. However, Tom has only one mission: like an obedient servant, he is programmed to make his mistress happy by satisfying all her desires.

What would Hegel have said to his wife Marie at the end of the film? How would he have commented on this film about humans and robots living ever closer together? Would he perhaps have thought that there is nothing more topical than his famous master and servant dialectic? Or would he have thought that his own sister Christiane could benefit from the comfort offered by artificial intelligence to patients with mental illness and depression? As we know, we are no longer satisfied with the fact that the further development of artificial intelligence creates “useful” robots that fulfill a specific function; we want them to become ever more sentient, adaptable, emotional and empathic, and to be able to stimulate interactions, for example, as the therapy robot

54 Hegel, *Briefe III*, p. 199; *Letters*, p. 661.

55 Hegel, *Philosophie der Kunst* [transcript by von der Pfordten], ed. by Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, Jeong-Im Kwon, Karsten Berr, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005, p. 56.

Kaspar has been doing for autistic children since 2005⁵⁶, or the seal robot *Paro* (designed by Takanori Shibata), which, as a pet, keeps people company in hospitals or patients with dementia in retirement homes.

While in the first part of our paper the profile of a Hegel who was decidedly empathetic towards art and beauty emerged, this profile appears considerably reduced in the second part, as far as the so-called “artificial empathy” is concerned. First of all, it should be noted in advance that although Hegel does not profile himself as a defender and spokesman for women’s emancipation, women for him are still legal subjects like men, and marriage must be based on love and the free decision of both subjects.⁵⁷ He even agrees to divorce in case the differences between the spouses should reach the limit of “total foreignness”⁵⁸. His view of emotional relations, and marriage in particular as a mutual recognition⁵⁹, is thus based on an egalitarian and realistic view in which the spouses continually adjust to each other. Even Hegel’s letters from Nuremberg to his fiancée and future wife Marie reveal a deep awareness of the light and shadow that hangs over every emotional relationship and that should be seen as a healthy rather than a toxic ferment for the relationship, beyond any simplistic idealization of the other. Hegel wrote to Marie in the summer of 1811:

“I remind you, dear Marie, that your deeper sense, the formation of what is higher in you, has taught you as well that in non superficial natures every sensation of happiness is connected with a sensation of melancholy.”⁶⁰

56 That the humanoid robot received such a name is no coincidence; the reference is of course to the famous Nuremberg foundling, who was very close to the Hegel family. On this allow me to refer to my essay *Hegel and Kaspar Hauser between Reality and Fiction. Bildung to the Test of Idiocy, Dehumanization, and Artificial Intelligence in Philosophy and Madness: From Kant to Hegel and Beyond*, ed. by Francesca Iannelli and Mariannina Failla, Milano: Mimesis, 2023, pp. 95–125.

57 See Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* [1820], in: *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 14.1, ed. by Klaus Grotzsch/Elisabeth Weisser-Lohmann, Hamburg: Meiner, 2009, p. 145; en. translation, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. by Thomas Malcolm Knox, revised, edited, and introduced by Stephen Houlgate, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 163.

58 See Vieweg, *Hegel. Der Philosoph der Freiheit*, Munich: Beck, 2019, pp. 501–503; p. 766.

59 See Vieweg, *Das Denken der Freiheit*, Munich: Fink, 2012, p. 256.

60 Hegel, *Briefe I*, p. 368; *Letters*, pp. 243–244. For more background, see Erzsébet Rózsa, ‘Liebe und Freiheit bei Hegel’, in *Morale, etica, religione tra filosofia classica tedesca e pensiero contemporaneo*, ed. by Luca Illetterati et al. Padova: Padova University Press, 2020, pp. 365–377.

But what would happen if the complexity and versatility typical of humans and their relationships, albeit imperfect, were replaced by artificial empathy from algorithmically “perfect” robotic partners? And what would the empathic philosopher Hegel say to these therapeutic and sentient robots? Would he see emancipated servants in them? Or would they be nothing more than “quasi-servants” for him, because unfortunately or fortunately, unlike humans, they cannot make the experience of “absolute fear”, they thus – as Coeckelbergh⁶¹ sees it – lack the struggle for life and death with technology in the narrower sense, because actual “recognition” is not possible, since we can only recognize or be recognized by those who can die.⁶²

The question is as complex as it is stimulating, for indeed one of the ultimate limits of artificial intelligence is precisely artificial empathy, which can be seen here in the context of the famous master/servant dialectic that has often been invoked in recent decades, especially by philosophers of technology, as a privileged and conflicted interpretation of the relationship between humans and technology: the servant would obviously be the robot, as it seems at first sight, since even his name “robot” in Czech originally denoted the slave, while the master would in fact be *Homo Technologicus*, increasingly dependent on technology in all aspects of his private and public existence. However, not everyone would agree with this Hegelian-style narrative: Wallach, for example, claimed that the real “dangerous” mistress is technology⁶³, while Bryson insists on the need to enslave machines without humanizing them⁶⁴. Brinck and Balkenius trust in a “mutual recognition” of social robots and humans; that is, those robots programmed to interact with humans in the fields of tourism, health and education. In their opinion, cooperation between humans and androids can only be balanced and effective if these robots are regarded as “equals” and not as “tools”⁶⁵.

What position would Hegel have taken? The philosopher had been aware since Jena of the dangers of technology understood as “simplification,” in which humans risk losing humanity and know-how. As Hegel makes clear in

61 Mark Coeckelbergh, “The tragedy of the master: automation, vulnerability, and distance”, in: *Ethics and Information Technology*, 17(3), 2015, pp. 219–229, here p. 222.

62 On the “absolute Furcht” see Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, p. 115; *Phenomenology*, p. 116.

63 Wendell Wallach, *A Dangerous Master: How to Keep Technology from Slipping Beyond Our Control*, Basic Books: 2015.

64 Joanna J. Bryson, *Robots should be slaves*. In: Yorick Wilks (ed.), *Close Engagements with Artificial Companions: Key social, psychological, ethical and design issues*, Oxford: University of Oxford, 2010, pp. 63–74.

65 Ingar Brinck/Christian Balkenius (2020). “Mutual Recognition in Human-Robot Interaction: A Deflationary Account”, in: *Philosophy & Technology*, pp. 33, 53–70, here p. 67.

the 1805–1806 *Philosophy of Spirit*, work is becoming increasingly mechanical and abstract and can therefore easily be done by a machine, but this means that workers are becoming increasingly deadened. The more work machines take over, the more one-sided and alienating man's work becomes. In other words, human beings are under the illusion of simplifying their life by simplifying work through the introduction of machines, but in doing so they fall into a perverse mechanism, a vicious circle in which false needs increase dramatically and desires become more and more compulsive, while neither time nor happiness increase.⁶⁶ In the Berlin lectures, especially those in the *Philosophy of Right*, this critical view is confirmed several times, especially with reference to the extraordinary increase in production in early 19th century England. Hegel recalls with concern the dramatic episodes of Luddism from 1811 to 1817, to the extent that “broadless laborers”⁶⁷ destroyed the machines that they saw as terrible rivals.⁶⁸

It must be admitted that Hegel does not see technical progress as diabolical in itself, since it manifests human intelligence and the will to dominate the forces of nature; rather, he condemns its excessive and reckless use, which numbs man, destroys all expressions of “concrete[n] spirit[s]”⁶⁹ and creates dependence. In the *Science of Logic*, for instance, he delivers a eulogy to the “tool”: it “lasts while the immediate enjoyments pass away and are forgotten. It is in their tools that human beings possess power over external nature, even though with respect to their purposes they are subjected to it.”⁷⁰ However, in the Berlin Lectures of the *Philosophy of Right*, he distinguishes precisely

66 See Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe III*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 8, ed. by Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Hamburg: Meiner, 1976, p. 224–225; en. translation *Hegel and the human spirit: a translation of the Jena lectures on the philosophy of spirit (1805–6) with commentary*, trans. by Leo Rauch, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983, p. 120–121.

67 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts II, Wintersemester 1822/23. Nachschrift Heinrich Gustav Hotho*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 26.2, ed. by Klaus Grotzsch, Hamburg: Meiner, 2015, p. 962.

68 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts II, Wintersemester 1821/22. Nachschrift – Anonymus (Kiel)*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 26.2, ed. by Klaus Grotzsch, Hamburg: Meiner, 2015, p. 726; Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts II [1822/23]*, p. 962.

69 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts I, Wintersemester 1819/20. Nachschrift Johann Rudolf Ringier mit Varianten aus der Nachschrift Anonymus (Bloomington) und Nachschrift Anonymus (Bloomington) mit Varianten aus der Nachschrift Johann Rudolf Ringier*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 26.1, ed. by Dirk Felgenhau, Hamburg: Meiner, 2013, p. 463.

70 Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik. Zweiter Teil [1816]*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 12: *Wissenschaft der Logik. Zweiter Band. Die subjektive Logik*, ed. by Friedrich Hogemann/Walter Jaeschke, Hamburg: Meiner, 1981, p. 166; en. translation *Science of Logic*, ed. by George Di Giovanni, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 663.

between the tool conceived as “medius terminus”, which man, understood as “the active”, proudly uses, and the “machine”, whose principle of movement is outside the human mind and which tends to replace and dominate it.⁷¹ This is why Hegel likes to emphatically refer to the machine as “the unspiritual”⁷² and “the spiritless”⁷³, because he fears a “degradation of humans”⁷⁴, which “in the end” will be perceived as completely “superfluous”.⁷⁵

Hegel is thus fully aware that modernity is hypermental, fragmented, and dissonant, that the emerging capitalist society is convulsed by explosive contradictions, and that modern man must find strategies to contain the risks of the inexorable process of mechanization of labor. Hegel’s diagnosis is thus extremely clear and could be summarized as follows: the industrial and technological revolution of his time – like the digital one in ours⁷⁶ – offers as many benefits as it causes harm.⁷⁷ What is gained in efficiency is lost in humanity. Modern man becomes visibly dulled, his life becomes more monotonous, unhappy, poorer, and more dependent, and he is willing to squander on his day off what he has earned in the rest of the working week.⁷⁸ On the other hand, according to Juchniewicz⁷⁹, mechanization paradoxically also increases cooperation and stimulates new forms of social aggregation.

Admittedly, Hegel could not yet imagine that machines would even be able to replace human feelings and affection in the not-too-distant future; however, analogous to what he presented in Jena and then in Berlin, given this disturbing and dystopian notion, he would have seen artificial empathy as a simplification and thus as a loss rather than a conquest, a failure rather than a challenge.

71 See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts I* [1819/20], p. 463–464;

72 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts II* [1821/22], p. 726.

73 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts II* [1822/23], p. 962.

74 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts II* [1821/22], p. 726.

75 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts III, Wintersemester 1824/25. Nachschrift Karl Gustav Julius von Griesheim*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 26.3, ed. by Klaus Grotzsch, Hamburg: Meiner, 2015, p. 1326.

76 The fact that these are not completely overlapping phenomena is well explained by Yuk Hui: “We are no longer in an epoch of repetitive mechanical reproduction, but rather of recursive digital reproduction. That takes a very different form, which increasingly resembles the organic mode of reproduction in plants and animals, but with much higher capacity and speed of mutation”. Yuk Hui, *Art and Cosmotechnics*, p. 211.

77 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts II* [1821/22], p. 726.

78 See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts I, Wintersemester 1817/18. Nachschrift – Peter Wannemann*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 26.1, ed. by Dirk Felgenhauer, Hamburg: Meiner, 2013, p. 111. See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Rechts II* [1821/22], p. 726.

79 Natalia Juchniewicz, “Dialectical technology – Hegel on means, tools and the machine”, in: *Filozofia*, 73, (2018), pp. 818–830.

With its realistic view of love relationships, then, Hegel's philosophy could go some way toward helping us counter the fears that have arisen in recent years of a probable "end of sex," thanks to – but not limited to – degenerating sexual robots that reduce love relationships to a mere mechanical process. Likewise, it would be a remedy against the growing hedonistic idolization of happiness, understood as an absolute value to be achieved at all costs, even at the price of "prostitution" with robotics, which, however, can only offer a quasi empathy and a quasi recognition.

For Hegel, man actually experiences a duplication in the work of art and can therefore find himself again, as it happened to himself before the van Cleve triptych, one cannot really reflect oneself in robots, however empathetic they may be (like Tom from the Schrader film). As Hegel explains in the supplements to the *Encyclopedia*: "Only by the becoming free of the servant consequently also the master becomes completely free".⁸⁰

Hegel thus hopes for a symmetrical recognition, an emancipation from any form of instrumentalization of the Other, which in our hyper-technological times has degenerated into a paradoxical robotic hyper-empathization that has gripped the East in particular. As Slavoj Žižek suggests, the power of Hegelian philosophy lies above all in its "radical opening towards the future"⁸¹, not because of visionary or prophetic abilities, but thanks to its rootedness in its time, when the degenerations of ours began. By seeking forms of empathy in a robot, by unscrupulously anthropomorphizing technology, humans relegate themselves to the position of vulnerable and dependent pseudo-masters who have constant desires to satisfy and who are pleased to have at their disposal a servant programmed only to accommodate them. As a counterbalance to these excesses, which are becoming increasingly disturbing due to the "robotmania" of recent years, our old Hegel, as the "involuntary godfather" of empathy, seems to point out some possible solutions, which we will consider in the conclusions of our paper.

4. Conclusions

Undoubtedly, Hegel, although well aware of the one-sidedness of an aesthetic approach based exclusively on feelings, was an empathic philosopher, both as a

80 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des subjektiven Geistes II. Nachschriften zu dem Kolleg des Wintersemesters 1827/28 und Zusätze*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 25.2, ed. by Christoph Johannes Bauer, Hamburg: Meiner, 2012, p. 1083; my translation.

81 Slavoj Žižek, *Hegel in a Wired Brain*, p. 2.

recipient and as a philosopher of art. We obviously cannot claim the same with respect to surrogate technologies and machines capable of artificial empathy. In accordance with what Hegel declares in *Logic*: “the plough is more honorable than are immediately the enjoyments which it procures and which are the purposes.”⁸² He would probably have appreciated the sophisticated robotic surgery of our time, which is virtuously “instrumental,” while he would have remained skeptical about the idea of Ai-Da and her robotic works, in which one can hardly feel “native”. “Even in Paris he had fallen into the trap of the immersive experience offered to him in Neorama, which appeared to him as an expansion of his experiential horizon; whereas this expansion, if not appropriately contextualized and amplified, turns into its opposite and becomes a limitation of lived experience. In fact, Hegel was content with the virtual experience of St. Peter’s Basilica that he had in Neorama, without going to Italy.

What, then, is the risk of artificial empathy (and, in general, of substitute technology) if not the impoverishment of the human to the point of its disappearance and scrapping, which Hegel already sees clearly on the horizon of the future? It would therefore be desirable to rediscover the value of duplication, a duplication achieved above all through (human) art and through genuine, symmetrical interpersonal relationships, and to practice a healthy and responsible use of technology (in a wide variety of fields, not least the military), which, when used well, is an expression of the cunning of reason, while when misused, in the sense of the “logic of replacement” (by Yuk Hui), it becomes a new chain to be broken.

Let us recall that the mind is not a bone and that humans are not algorithms!

82 Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik* [1816], p. 166; *Science of logic*, p. 663.