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Aesthetics and Ethics: a tenuous relation revisited

The currently renewed discussions around the questions of values and ethics in modern professions and business practices compels one to reconsider aged maxims about the role of the realm of art and aesthetics, and particularly that of individual artworks in the ethical realm. In this paper I will take issue with this question, in the hope of turning this problematical relation once again into a matter of thinking.

When a thorny question as the present one suggests itself, it is inevitable that one has to turn one's attention to a handful towering intellectual figures of modernity. Yet it is absolutely important to remind oneself that this attempt should not be guided by the utilitarian motive of carrying out just another comparative study of these intellectual figureheads, pointing out the similarities as well as apparent differences between them. This, I reckon, would be all-too-familiar and therefore boring. Rather, it is the presencing of an issue especially in our techno-scientific modern age, before the 'eye of the soul' (Aristotle), so to speak, compelling thinking/reflection to adopt it as its 'matter' [*das Sache*]; in this case, the troubled relationship between the sphere of art/aesthetics on one hand and the cloudy realm of ethics, on the other. The contribution that such figureheads as Heidegger, Gadamer, Lukács, and Adorno would make would be of relevance only if a problem makes its presence felt before a thinking sufficiently sensitized to the issue so that it can be turned into a 'matter' for reflection. As will be clear in the following, I hope, such is the case for all these thinkers who are, remarkably, guided by the same concern in spite of the otherwise huge gulf separating and sometimes forcefully pitching some of them against each other. In the subsequent discussion, therefore, my intention is to enter into a dialogue –and hopefully a fruitful one- with their discourses, especially with that of Gadamer when 'it is our ethical situation that is in question.' Here, too, it is advisable to remind oneself of one's own prejudices and the possibility of seeing them in positive light for any genuine communication to take place, and especially with genuine works of art.¹

¹1. "It is not so much our judgements as it is our prejudices that constitute our being. This is a provocative formulation, for I am using it to restore to its rightful place a positive concept of prejudice that was driven out of our linguistic usage by the French and the English Enlightenment. It can be shown that the concept of prejudice did not originally have the meaning we have attached to it. Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified or erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth...Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience something – whereby what we encounter says something to us [...*daß nicht so sehr unsere Urteile als unsere Vorurteile unser Sein ausmachen. Das ist eine provokatorische Formulierung, sofern ich damit einen Begriff des Vorurteils, der durch die französische und englische Aufklärung aus dem Sprachgebrauch verdrängt worden ist, wieder in sein Recht einsetze. Es läßt sich nämlich zeigen, daß der Begriff des Vorurteils ursprünglich durchaus nicht den Sinn allein hat, den wir damit verbinden. Vorurteile sind nicht notwendig unberechtigt und irrig, so daß sie die Wahrheit verstellen. In Wahrheit liegt es in der geschichtlichkeit unseres Existenz, daß die Vorurteile im wörtlichen Sinne des Wortes die vorgängige Gerichtetheit all unseres Erfahren-Könnens ausmachen. Sie sind voreingenommenheiten unserer Weltoffenheit, die gerade zu Bedingungen dafür sind, daß wir etwas erfahren, daß uns das, was uns begegnet, etwas sagt.*]." "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," **Philosophical Hermeneutics**, tr. by David E. Linge (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1977): 9. / »Die Universalität des hermeneutischen Problems [1966]«, **Kleine Schriften, I: Philosophie, Hermeneutik** (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967): 106.

One example would probably clarify my point: The hidden complicity between positivism, on one hand, and existing structures of both the political power and the ‘culture industry,’ on the other, is well-known on the basis of Adorno and Horkheimer’s seminal work, and especially Adorno’s posthumously published *Ästhetische Theorie*.² Gadamer’s strong reservations about Adorno’s overemphasis on the role of aesthetic consciousness *à la Kant* –and here is one important rift between the two-³ notwithstanding, it would not be difficult to observe an accord between their views with respect to today’s mass media and the tendency of curtailment of art under the conditions of ‘administered society.’

Nevertheless, such swaying power should not lead one to overlook the essential emphasis placed by all these thinkers on the primacy of particular “works of art” in creating their “own principle” of objectivity, their “immanent law of the work” [*immanente Gesetz des Gebildes*]⁴

²2. Max Horkheimer und Theodor W. Adorno, **Dialectic of Enlightenment**, tr. by John Cumming (New York: The Seabury Press, 1972): esp. “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” 120-167. / **Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente** (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1971 [1944]): »Kulturindustrie. Aufklärung als Massenbetrug«, 108-150; again Theodor W. Adorno, “Culture Industry Reconsidered,” **New German Critique**, 6 (Fall 1975): 12-19. / »Résumé über Kulturindustrie«, Theodor W. Adorno, **Gesammelte Schriften, Band X/1 [Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I: Prismen/Ohne Leitbild]** (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997): 337-345. Finally, Theodor W. Adorno, **Aesthetic Theory**, tr. by Robert Hullot-Kantor (London: The Athlone Press 1997): *passim*, particularly 314-15. / **Ästhetische Theorie** (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973): 466-67.

³3. The adverse effect of “the universal leveling process in which we cease to notice anything – a process encouraged by a civilization that dispenses increasingly powerful stimuli [*sich aus dem alles einbnenden Überhören und Übersehen zu erheben, das eine immer reizmächtigere Zivilisation zu vertreiben am Werk ist*]” has been a major issue for Gadamer as well; cf. for example, “The Relevance of the Beautiful: Art as play, Symbol, and festival,” **The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays**, tr. by Nicholas Walker, ed. and intro. by Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986: 36. / »Die Aktualität des Schönen. Kunst als Spiel, Symbol und Fest« [1974], **Gesammelte Werke, Band 8 [Ästhetik und Poetik, I: Kunst als Aussage]** (Tübingen J. C. B. Mohr, 1993): 127. As to the perceived difference on Gadamer’s part, he says: “The point of divergence between Adorno and myself, on the question of abstract art, is the aesthetic consciousness. Adorno follows Kant’s definition of taste, and uses this definition for art. This is a deep mistake. One of my central concerns has been to demonstrate that the aesthetic consciousness, as such, does not exist. Art is always more than merely the fulfillment of aesthetic expectations. Where I do agree with Adorno is with regard to the crucial part played by the mass media. The multiplication of imagery by the mass media has an enormously leveling effect, so that art must make very special efforts to be seen and heard about. This is the reason why modern art is so hard to make sense of. It is a good reason. The difficulty of modern art is a necessary difficulty. We are so flooded by information that only very provocative forms of composition can attract the concentration of an audience. This is how I understand modern art.” Roy Boyne, “Interview with Hans-Georg Gadamer,” **Theory, Culture and Society**, V/1 (Feb. 1988): 32.

⁴4. Adorno says: “Most important, the artistic process, ... is by no means exhausted in the subjective intention... Intention is one moment in it; intention is transformed into a work only in exhaustive interaction with other moments; the subject matter, the immanent law of the work, and –especially in Hölderlin- the objective linguistic form. Part of what estranges refined taste from art is that it credits the artist with everything, while artists’ experience teaches them how little what is most their own belongs to them, how much they are under the compulsion of the work itself. The more completely the artist’s intention is taken up into what he makes and disappears in it without a trace, the more successful the work is. [*Vor allem aber erschöpft der künstlerische Prozeß, ... keineswegs derart sich in der subjektiven Intention, ... Die Intention ist darin ein Moment: sie verwandelt sich zum Gebilde nur, indem sie an anderen Momenten sich abarbeitet, dem Sachgehalt, dem immanenten Gesetz des Gebildes und –zumal bei Hölderlin- der objektiven Sprachgestalt. Zur Kunstfremdheit des Feinsinns rechnet es, den Künstler alles zuzutrauen; die Künstler selbst indessen werden durch ihre erfahrung darüber belhrt, wie wenig ihr Eigenes ihnen gehört, in welchem Maß sie dem Zwang des*”

via their truth-content displayed in right measure,⁵ rather than resorting either to some abstract theory of art. In other words, artworks are supposed to be *index veri et falsii* in their very thinghood.⁶ This finds its parallel in questions of ethical nature which cannot be subsumed under the legislative power of a “practical philosophy” which is, by nature, a theoretical endeavour, prescribing abstract maxims for ethical conduct. I will return to this point a little later.

Yet the observation concerning the work of art creating its own principle without recourse to a theory does not mean that it is readily and directly experienced without the ‘mediation’ of a sufficiently differentiated “subjectivity” on the receiving side. Adorno emphasizes repeatedly that, in an age dominated by the tremendous leveling by both the powers of capital and the ideology of culture industry, to expect a liberating effect to unfold from the particular works of art would be quite naïve and seriously incomplete, given the fact that at a time when *Kitsch* increasingly holds sway in the face of a nullified bourgeois religion of art [*bürgerliche Kunstreligion*] and a “culture offering its wares [*seine Sparten*] in a selection for *highbrows*, *middlebrows*, and *lowbrows*.” In the end, art capitulates to the *Kitsch* as “simulation of nonexistent feelings” and thus proving “[w]hat once was art can later become *kitsch* [*Was Kunst war, kann Kitsch werden.*]”⁷

In this sense, the truth-content of the works of art standing there in and of themselves, does not automatically produce a transforming effect on the perceiver, suspending his familiar everydayness and hurling him out of *der Ganze Mensch* into being one with the reflective stance of *Menschen ganz*, as is powerfully suggested by Rilke’s well-known and often-quoted poem.⁸ Nor do the categories of “beauty” [*das Schöne*] and “sublime” [*das Erhabene*] both

Gebildes gehorchen.]” “Parataxis: On Hölderlin’s Late Poetry,” **Notes to Literature**, Vol. III, tr. by Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992): 110. / »Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins«, **Noten zur Literatur**, Vol. III (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981 [1974]): 448.

⁵5. In this respect, cf., Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Speechless Image,” **The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays**: 83-91; esp. 91. / »Vom Verstummen des Bildes«, **Kleine Schriften II: Interpretationen** (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967): 227-234; esp. 234.

⁶6. This extremely important qualification brought to the artworks, namely “*index veri et falsii*,” their being their own criterion of truth, finds in the realm of morality its counterpart in what is tacitly conveyed by the two Greek expressions, especially in Aristotle, namely, “*τὸ δέον (tō dēon)*” [*das Tunliche*; the right thing to do] and “*τὸ ἥτι (tō hōti)*” [*das >Daß<*; ‘this something’]; but more about it below, notes 23 and 24.

⁷7. Theodor W. Adorno, **Aesthetic Theory**: 314, 315. / **Ästhetische Theorie**: 466, 467.

⁸8. “...for here there is no place/that does not see you. You must change your life [»Du mußt dein Leben ändern.«].” Having in mind this well-known exemplar from Rilke’s poem, “*Archaische Torso Apollos*,” Gadamer endorses thereby the ethical élan of “timelessness of the rainbow of art which spans all historical distances [*die Zeitlosigkeit des überalle geschichtlichen Abstände sich wölbenden Regenbogens der Kunst*]” conveyed by its particular works/creations [*Werke/Gebilde*] with great enthusiasm: “In comparison with all other linguistic and nonlinguistic tradition, the work of art is the absolute present for each present [*daß es für jeweilige Gegenwart absolute Gegenwart ist*], and at the same time holds its word in readiness for every future [*uns zugleich für alle Zukunft sein Wort bereithält*]. The intimacy with which the work of art touches us is at the same time, in enigmatic fashion, a shattering and a demolition of the familiar [*auf rätselhafte Weise Erschütterung und Einsturz des Gewohnten*]. It is not only the ‘This art thou [»Das bist du!«]’ disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock [*das es in einem freudigen und furchtbaren Schreck aufdeckt*]; it also says to us; ‘Thou must alter thy life [»Du mußt dein Leben ändern.«].’” “Aesthetics and Hermeneutics,” **Philosophical Hermeneutics**: 216 and 104, respectively. / »Ästhetik und Hermeneutik« [1964], **Gadamer Lesebuch**,

of which are, in turn, quickly turned into the cultural wares of a desperately clever art market can be taken at their face value. In any case, Adorno would hasten to add that, without the necessary *Bildung*, hardly anything in our contemporary world of semblances addresses us directly.⁹

I'll leave aside the discussion of the 'sublime' which, to certain eyes, is no more than 'bourgeois mysticism,'¹⁰ a clever move of submission to a higher power in the bourgeois age in order to hold the *ego* [*Ich*] in check so that it will not slide into some kind of 'loosening of one's inner cord' 'flagrant self-assertion'¹¹ and 'wanton violence' [*húbris*; (**Übri**j)] in

herausgegeben von Jean Grondin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997): 119. Similarly, Lukács too The almost identical views expressed by both Gadamer and Lukács cannot be easily dismissed and, given necessary qualifications under changed conditions, still provides a powerful pointer to our historically determinate human condition (*nostra causa agitur*: "it is our case that is in question). Lukács, too, refers to Rilke's poem, underlining the significance of its appeal to the beholder, something incomparable to any other human experience. The same appeal, Lukács argues a little later, was an axiom in Brecht's art as well. G. Lukács, **Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen**, (Darmstadt und Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1963); 1. Halbband, Zehntes Kapitel: »Probleme der Mimesis VI/II: Die Katharsis als allgemeine Kategorie der Ästhetik«: 802-8. For further elaboration of the concepts >der Ganze Mensch< and >Menschen ganz< as well as the emancipatory message, "*nostra causa agitur*," see Ágnes Heller, "Lukács's Aesthetics," *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, VII [# 24] (Winter 1966): 84-94 and G. H. R. Parkinson, "Lukács on the Central Category of Aesthetics" in **Georg Lukács: The Man, his work and his ideas**, ed. by G. H. R. Parkinson (New York Random House, 1970): 109-146. For a treatment of the aesthetic theories of both Lukács and Adorno, see Nicolae Tertulian, "Lukács' Aesthetics and Its Critics," **Telos**, # 52 (Summer 1982): 159-67.

⁹. I tend to think what Adorno has in mind with respect to *Bildung* in this context is totally different from the current and often cleverly tendentious 'cultured society' [*Bildungsgesellschaft*] which Gadamer, too, does not appear to hold in high regard for its promotion of "later bourgeois religion of culture [*die spätbürgerliche Bildungsreligion*];" cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful: Art as play, Symbol, and festival," **The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays**: 32. / »Die Aktualität des Schönen. Kunst als Spiel, Symbol und Fest« [1974], **Gesammelte Werke, Band 8**: 123. Gadamer once wrote: "A genuine artistic creation stands within a particular community, and such a community is always distinguishable from the cultured society that is informed and terrorized by art criticism [*Jedem echten künstlerischen Schaffen ist seine Gemeinde zugeordnet, und eine solche ist immer etwas anderes als die Bildungsgesellschaft, die von der Kunstkritik informiert und terrorisiert wird*]." "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," **Philosophical Hermeneutics**: 5. / »Die Universalität des hermeneutischen Problems [1966]«, **Kleine Schriften, I: Philosophie, Hermeneutik** (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967) : 103.

¹⁰10. An appropriate coinage by John Beverly in particular reference to music where he says: "Just before Monteverdi, the Italian Mannerists had proclaimed the formal autonomy of the art work from religious dogma. But if the increasing secularization of music in the European late Baroque and 18th century led on the one hand to the Jacobin utopianism of the *Ninth Symphony*, it produced on the other something like Kant's aesthetics of the sublime, that is a mysticism of the bourgeois ego. As Adorno was aware, we are still in modern music in a domain where, as in the relation of music and feudalism, aesthetic experience, repression and sublimation, and class privilege and self-legitimation converge." "The Ideology of Postmodern Music and Left Politics," **Critical Quarterly**, 31.1 (Spring 1989): 42, note 7, 55. Adorno, being fully aware that "...Kant faithfully presented the power of the subject [*die Kraft des Subjekts*] as the precondition of the sublime," provides one with further confirmation in the relevant passage quoted by Beverly: "Beethoven's symphonic language, which in its most secret chemistry is the bourgeois process of production as well as the expression of capitalism's perennial disaster, at the same time becomes a fait social by its gesture of tragic affirmation: Things are as they must and should be and are therefore good. At the same time, this music belongs to the revolutionary process of bourgeois emancipation, just as it anticipates its apotheosis. The more deeply artworks are deciphered, the less their antithesis to praxis remains absolute;" **Aesthetic Theory**: 245, 241. / **Ästhetische Theorie**: 364, 358. For an extended discussion of the concept of 'sublime,' see Terry Eagleton, **The Ideology of the Aesthetic** (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1990): *passim*.

boundless pursuit after the ‘beautiful.’ Adorno in fact suggests that it might be better to stop discussing the sublime [*das Erhabene*] since the concept, being completely corrupted by the idle talk of culture religion [*Kulturreligion*], has almost become ridiculous [*lächerlich*] now.¹²

As for ‘beauty,’ it does little good to reiterate Adorno’s maxim that “beauty is an exodus from the kingdom of means” to which he, in fact, brought important qualifications in response to possible misinterpretations.¹³ For one thing, there exists nothing that is simply beautiful or ugly and, in spite of the immediateness [*die Unmittelbarkeit*] which characterizes the two, it would simply not do either to hypostatize or relativize them. Moreover, art cannot be reduced to mere identification with beauty, often overlooked by modern aesthetics which tends to ignore the fact that the absorption of ugly [*die Häßlichkeit*] by beauty [*die Schönheit*] as its opposite enhances the power of beauty.¹⁴

Such a critical view of the one-time Western concept of beauty also finds its counterpart in Adorno’s discussion of ‘tonality’ in music and, more particularly, in his claim that the “very notion that tonality is natural is itself an illusion. Tonality did not exist from the outset... The semblance of naturalness which serves to disguise historical relationships inescapably attaches itself to the mind that the rule of reason is unimpaired while surrounded by a world full of persistent irrationality. Tonality is probably as ephemeral as the order of reality to which it belongs.”¹⁵

¹¹11. Philip Wheelwright, *Heraclitus* (New York: Atheneum, 1964): 85.

¹²12. *Aesthetic Theory*: 198. / *Ästhetische Theorie*: 295.

¹³13. “Beauty is the exodus of what has objectivated itself in the realm of means and ends from this realm. [»*Schönheit ist der Exodus dessen, was im Reich der Zwecke sich objektiviert, aus diesem.*«]” *Aesthetic Theory*: 288. / *Ästhetische Theorie*: 428. Adorno also brought qualifications to some of his other sayings which are often quoted out of context. One salient example concerns his saying about poetry after Auschwitz. Where the original is: “Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today [»*Kulturkritik findet sich der letzten Stufe der Dialektik von Kultur und Barbarei gegenüber: nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch, und das frißt auch die Erkenntnis an, die ausspricht, warum es unmöglich ward, heute Gedichte zu schreiben.*«].” “Cultural Criticism and Society,” Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*, tr. by Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981): 34. / »Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft« *Gesammelte Schriften X/1 [Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I: Prismen/Ohne Leitbild]* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997): 30. Adorno qualifies this, however, in his introduction [June 1969] to the second part of his *Kritische Modelle*: “It must be strongly emphasized that education after Auschwitz can succeed only in a global situation that no longer produces the conditions and the people that bear the responsibility for Auschwitz. This global situation has not yet changed, and it is unfortunate that those who desire the transformation obstinately refuse this idea.” *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, tr. by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1998): 126 / *Stichworte: Kritische Modelle 2* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969): 9-10. [my emphasis]

¹⁴14. *Aesthetic Theory*: 273. / *Ästhetische Theorie*: 406, 407.

¹⁵15. “Music and New Music,” Theodor W. Adorno, *Quasi una Fantasia*, tr. by Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1992 [orig. in 1963]): 263. Even though the realm of aesthetics and art cover not only the classical “*schöne Kunst*” and the literary production but additionally music which is considered to be the “most sublime of arts” (Gadamer) and being neither conceptual nor linguistic yet having a syntax and logical structure (Adorno), I don’t think the limited space opened up by the present article does justice to music and its ethical potential which deserves a lengthier treatment. It would be of value, however, to be reminded at the moment that music is by its very nature the vehicle by which we escape the realm of means and ends and enter that of

Yet there are works of art even under these conditions of contemporary civilization. How are they still possible, if we slightly bend Lukács' rhetorical question put to his teacher, Max Weber, »*Es gibt Kunstwerke, wie sind sie Möglich?*«, or similarly, Gadamer's deployment of the poetic message in Rilke's 'thing-poems' [*Dinggedichte*] to the same effect.¹⁶

Given all these, for the expected emancipatory impact to take effect under the *Diktat* of a 'quality' work of art, the existing needs of the people can not be taken as a measure where they are manufactured and enforced. For this, one needs the mediating role of "a theory of society as a whole [*eine Theorie der Gesamtgesellschaft*]." ¹⁷

Something similar can and should be said concerning 'values,' 'ethical behavior,' and the like. Since the truth-content of artworks cannot be dissociated from ethical concerns of the humanity of which we are a member, any serious probing into the sphere of art gets entangled with such concerns about should in fact be complemented by one regarding the ethical conduct in a historically determinate social formation. We have already pointed out that any recourse to a 'practical philosophy' is of no help because it is already a theoretical enterprise and precisely for the reason that the "right thing to do" [*das Tunliche; tò déon (tŌ dŏn)*] cannot be prescribed by abstract maxims, least of all in the sphere of art. Aristotle, especially in his works on ethics and politics for example, was not after an overall practical philosophy but the hidden, tacitly understood and agreed principle [*to hóti (tŌ Óti); das »Daß«*] of social existence. That is why he, remarkably, point to a sufficiently general conclusion about ethical and thereby political questions via his immense spectrum of observations concerning human and other animals.

As for the quite dubious usefulness of setting up agendas and having round tables of experts for ethical conduct in many walks of today's organized life, modern professions above all, we may cite an illuminating example from personal experience of Gadamer on the philosophy-politics connection, namely the blurred sense of time which disturbed the habitual pattern of migration in a pair of swallows who nested on his balcony and gave urgency to their hasty

freedom. "It was Schopenhauer," writes Slavoj Žižek, not far from Adorno, "who claimed that music brings us in contact with the *Ding-an-sich*: it renders directly the drive of the life substance the words can only signify. For that reason, music 'seizes' the subject in the real of his/her being, bypassing the detour of meaning: in music, we hear what we cannot see, the vibrating life-force beneath the flow of *Vorstellungen*." "I Hear You with My Eyes"; or, The Invisible Master," **Gaze and Voice as Love Objects**, ed. by Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham and London: Duke Univ. Press, 1996): 94.

¹⁶16. Éva Fekete and ÉvaKarádi, **György Lukács: His Life in Pictures and Documents** (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1981): 61. In posing the same question, Gadamer too relies on Rilke's powerful insight: "As Rilke says; 'Such a thing stood among men.' This fact that it exists, its facticity, represents an insurmountable resistance against any superior presumption that we can make sense of it at all. The work of art compels us to recognize this fact. 'There is no place which fails to see you. You must change your life.' [*um mit Rilke zu sprechen: »So etwas stand unter den Menschen« Dieses, daß es das gibt, die Faktizität, ist zugleich ein unüberwindlicher Widerstand gegen alle sich überlegen glaubende Sinnerwartung. Das anzuerkennen, zwingt uns das Kunstwerk. »Da ist keine Stelle, die dich nicht sieht. Du mußt dein Leben ändern.«*]" "The Relevance of the Beautiful: Art as play, Symbol, and festival," **The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays**: 36. / »Die Aktualität des Schönen. Kunst als Spiel, Symbol und Fest« [1974], **Gesammelte Werke, Band 8**: 123. [emphasis added]

¹⁷17. **Aesthetic Theory**: 265, 315. / **Ästhetische Theorie**: 395, 466.

departure, leaving their poor offspring behind whose bones are later found in the nest: a perfect example of *ethos* of living beings [*Lebewesen*] other than human species as dominated by the forces and cycles of nature.¹⁸

In fact, it is not as simple as that. It will be clear in the following that *ethos* as an ‘abode’ is not the sole and exclusive property of our species and other attributes which a superficial reading of Aristotle might lead to consider to belong solely to humans can be found in other animals as well; the examples are: an instinctual and yet very developed “sense of time” [*Sinn für Zeit*], the capacity of understanding [*súnēsis* (**sÚnesij**)], the so-called ‘practical wisdom’ or ‘prudence’ [*phronēsis* (**fron»sij**)].¹⁹

Nevertheless, the question of ‘habituation,’ *ethos* for *homo sapiens* cannot be treated along such simple, clear-cut behavior as is observed in other species; it demands a rather complicated reasoning for this “living being dwelling in language” [*zôion lógon êchon* (**zùon lÒgon œcon**)], especially concerning ‘values’ beyond the mere ‘value’ of selecting the best stone for simple utilitarian ends such as hunting and grinding, as in the case of cave-dwellers. Such seemingly simplistic ordinary-ontological question posed by Lukács,²⁰ if pursued rigorously,

¹⁸18. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Political Incompetence of Philosophy,” **The Heidegger Case: On Philosophy and Politics** der. Tom Rockmore ve Joseph Margolis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 366.

¹⁹19. “Thus, for example, Aristotle claimed that certain animals also clearly possess *phronesis*. He was thinking primarily about bees and ants, about animals which gather food for the winter and so, from a human point of view, reveal foresight, something which must include an awareness of time. An awareness of time – this is something momentous. For it does not signify merely an increase in knowledge, in the power of anticipation, but involves what is in fact a fundamentally different status altogether. It means the ability to forgo the gratification of the most immediate goal in favour of a long-term fixed purpose. [*So sagt z. B. Aristoteles, gewisse Tiere hätten offenkundig auch >phronesis< - er denkt vor allem an die Bienen, an die Ameisen, an die Tiere, die für den Winter sammeln und auf diese Weise, menschlich gesehen, Voraussicht uns das schließt ein: Sinn für Zeit - das ist etwas Ungeheures. Es bedeutet nicht bloß eine Erkenntnissteigerung, Vorausschau, sondern einen grundsätzlich anderen Status: Anhalten im Verfolgen des allernächsten Zwecks zugunsten eines auf längere Sicht angestrebten, festgehaltenen Zieles.*]”, Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Problem of Intelligence,” **The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age**, çev. Jason Geiger ve Nicholas Walker (London: Polity Press, 1996): 47. / »Zum Problem der Intelligenz«, **Über die Verborgenheit der Gesundheit** (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993): 67-68.

²⁰20. “I believe that here again something very simple is involved. Primitive man, whom I introduced earlier, selected some kind of stone. One stone is suitable to cut a branch, the other not, and this fact – suitable or unsuitable – poses a completely new question, which could not arise in organic nature, ..From the standpoint of inorganic nature this is completely immaterial, whilst in the simplest form of labour, the problem of the useful and the non-useful, the suitable and the unsuitable, already involves a concept of value. ...Here, in my opinion, is the ontological origin of what we call value, and from this antithesis of the valuable and the not valuable a completely new category now arises, which is basically what it is in social life that is meaningful or meaningless. Here you are faced with a great historic process. Meaningful life was originally simply identical with social conformity. Consider for example the famous epitaph of the Spartans who fell at Termopylae: a meaningful life for them was to obey their laws and die for Sparta. Even in the most heterogenous complexes of social life, a man must act in a unified way, for he must also reproduce his own life.” **Conversations with Lukács**, ed. by Theo Pinkus [with Wolfgang Abendroth, H. Heinz Holz, Leo Kofler] (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1974 [1967]): Conversation with Hans Heinz Holz: “Being and Consciousness,” 30. [emphases added] The epitaph in question says: ‘Foreigner, go tell the Spartans / that we lie here obedient to their commands. [*’W xe-n’, éggšlein Lakedaimon...oij Óti tíde ke...meqa, toj ke...nwn »masi peiqŌmenoi.*]’ Herodotus, **Histories**, Seventh Book (*Polymnia*), 228.2 [based on, **Herodotus**, Eng. tr. by A. D. Godley. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920)].

has important and, at the same time, complicated repercussions regarding ‘values,’ posing a major challenge for the thinking of such modern thinkers as, for example, Max Weber who felt necessary to make a distinction in his well-known lecture, “Politics as a Vocation” [*Politik als Beruf*] (1918), between an “ethics of conviction” [*Gesinnungsethik*] and an “ethics of responsibility” [*Verantwortungsethik*].²¹ More specifically, any agenda of questions concerning ethics where it became an issue for some major reason, takes for granted that there are systems of values, if not a single one, which flourish through processes of learning and socialization in a historically-determinate human society. So, the question for us, the moderns, who dwell on societal-cultural fault lines is: can one still talk about relatively stable, shared systems of human values, and where is today’s art in all this?

Gadamer who has written so much on the ethical dimension of art where certain of younger counterparts in other cultures of Europe half-heartedly dwell on it, relentlessly pursues the possibilities within reach for anyone who takes this question seriously and without resorting to neither the empty ethical precepts nor such equally empty illusory-ecstatic postmodern paraphernalia as ‘the aesthetics of existence.’ He lets the problem present itself starkly just before the example given above:

“The conflict lies within man himself, in his questions and musings, not between specialized and expert knowledge and its bearing on the social realities of practical life. As human beings, we have turned away so far from the natural order of things that we follow no natural *ethos* [ἦθος]. The word *ethos*, in Greek, signifies the manner of life that nature bestows on both humans and animals. Among animals, the power of habituation and instinctive direction is so dominant that it overwhelmingly determines their behavior.”²²

Before going into the brief discussion of the lack of continuity in today’s world between ‘*ethos*’ [ἦθος] and *ēthos* [ἠθος] which the Ancients, and Aristotle in particular, naturally took

²¹21. Gadamer, referring to Weber’s distinction between *Gesinnungsethik* and *Verantwortungsethik* says: “The extraordinary depoliticization of Germany in this period prompted Max Weber to coin the term ‘ethics of responsibility’ – as if responsibility did not lie at the heart of all ethics! In any case, ethics is not a question merely of attitude; it also means correct behavior and, therefore, the acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of one’s deeds and omissions. The ‘ethics of principle’ that people saw in Kant (erroneously, by the way) was in reality the expression of the German political weakness and lack of political solidarity. This weakness became a malady of the authority-oriented bourgeois society of nineteenth-century Germany... I would say basically that we each discover eventually within ourselves the responsibility that we all must bear.” “The Political Incompetence of Philosophy,” **The Heidegger Case: On Philosophy and Politics**: 369. [emphasis added] It is significant that the lecture Weber delivered at Munich University took place after the World War I (published in revised form in 1919 and after his death, in 1921) is the culmination of Weber’s intensive study of power politics, especially in Germany of his time. Runciman rightly suggests to read it both “as a discussion of the changing role of the professional politician in modern society and [as] a personal political testament.” See, **Weber: Selections in translation**, ed. by W. G. Runciman (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978): 210. For the full text of “Politics as a Vocation,” see, **From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology**, tr., ed. and intr. By Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967 [1946]): 77-128; esp. 115 where Weber says: “To be sure, mere passion, however genuinely felt, is not enough. It does not make a politician, unless passion as devotion to a ‘cause’ also makes responsibility to this cause the guiding star of action. And for this, a sense of proportion is needed.” Additionally see, Theodor W. Adorno, **Problems of Moral Philosophy**, ed. by Thomas Schröder and tr. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000): Lecture 1, p. 7 and note 16, p. 184.

²²22. “The Political Incompetence of Philosophy,” **The Heidegger Case: On Philosophy and Politics**: 366

for granted, it is necessary to look into where Gadamer's argument points at after providing his example:

“We humans have no such unambiguous instincts to direct us. We have ‘freedom of choice,’ or at least we seem to ourselves to have it, and we call it by that name. The Greeks used the expression *proh[?]airesis* [*proairesis* (**proa...resij**)] for it. The freedom to behave in a self-chosen way presupposes the ability to ask questions, to see possibilities even when they may not be able to be realized. Of course, anyone who does not have the imagination to see possibilities will not easily fall into error. So I would say, not only of Heidegger and so-called philosophers but of human beings in general, that every one of them is subject to error and falls prey (above all) to his or her secret wishes for happiness and the shimmering dreams of fulfillment. These depend on the assessment of one's own circumstances and relations with other human beings. We are all in danger of misjudging ourselves and of clinging to illusions...It is true of all knowledge that its practical application requires a special gift that does not rely on merely technically acquired information.”²³

Among the concepts to be discussed at some length in this extremely important and potent passage, two things in particular stand out if one is to take issue with the possibility of silent moral *Diktat* of any work of art today: namely the illusions producers and specialists both entertain as well as the limitations of technical cleverness and expertise when ethical issues are our main concern.

Neither Adorno nor Gadamer have entertained illusions about it. Often appealing to Kant's incomparable *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, and particularly to a passage where Kant is clearly far from any such illusion concerning the power a “moral [i.e. practical] philosophy” (which, importantly, he takes to be a ‘theoretical’ enterprise) in prescribing universal rules of right (moral) conduct for everyone so that they can lead a “good/right life” [*das richtige Leben*].²⁴ It appears that Gadamer, relying on Kant's authority, goes even

²³23. **Ibid**: 369. [emphasis added]

²⁴24. Kant's passage in translation: “Thus within the moral knowledge of common human reason we have attained its principle. To be sure, common human reason does not think of it abstractly in such a universal form, but it always has it in view and uses it as the standard of its judgements. It would be easy to show how common human reason, with this compass, knows well how to distinguish what is good, what is bad, and what is consistent or inconsistent with duty. Without in the least teaching common reason anything new, we need only to draw its attention to its own principle, in the manner of Socrates, thus showing that neither science nor philosophy is needed in order to know what one has to do in order to be honest and good, and even wise and virtuous. [*So sind wir denn in der moralischen Erkenntnis der gemeinen Menschenvernunft bis zu ihrem Prinzip gelangt, welches sie sich zwar freilich nicht so in einer allgemeinen Form abgesondert demkt, aber doch jederzeit wirklich vor Augen hat und zum Richtmaße ihrer Beurteilung braucht. Es ware hier leicht zu zeigen, wie sie, mit diesem Kompass in der Hand, in allen vorkommenden Fällen sehr gut Bescheid wisse, zu unterscheiden, was gut, was böse; pflichtmäßig oder pflichtwidrig sei, wenn man, ohne sie im mindesten etwas Neues zu lehren, sie nur, wie SOKRATES tat, auf ihr eigenes Prinzip aufmerksam macht, und daß es also keener Wissenschaft und Philosophie bedürfe, um zu wissen, was man zu tun habe, um ehrlich und gut, ja sogar, um weise und tugendhaft zu sein.*]” **Foundations of the Metaphysic of Morals**, tr. by Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1959): 20. / **Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten**, facsimile of **Immanuel Kants Werke**, Band IV, herausgegeben von Arthur Buchenau und Ernst Cassirer, Berlin 1922, with a translation into Turkish by Ioanna Kuçuradi (Ankara: Hacettepe University Pub. B 24, 1982): 19. This is clearly what Adorno refers to at the beginning of his 1963 lectures on moral philosophy: see Theodor W. Adorno, **Problems of Moral Philosophy**: 1-2; Note 5, 82.

further by ascribing the “right thing to do” [*das Tunliche; tò déon (tŌ dšon)*] to the tacit dimension of practical life and everyday existence, once again through a detour via Aristotle in whose time there was not yet a clear-cut term for the concept of “duty” [*officium; die Pflicht*], a term which has gained currency even much later than the Stoics who still regarded it as a ‘have’ a person might or might not possess. In fact, the word ‘duty’ which has now become a house word in Kant’s time is expressly used by him in the passage already mentioned.²⁵

All this comes up to one thing: as already emphasized on a par with artworks’ being *index veri et falsii*, basic moral precepts cannot be supplied by a moral (i.e. ‘practical’) philosophy which is already a theoretical enterprise. The principle of good conduct, ‘the right thing to do’ [*das Tunliche; tò déon (tŌ dšon)*] is ‘that which is for the general good of and therefore binding for everyone’ [*>gut und bindend<; àgathòn kai déon; εγαqŌn ka^ dšon*]. This is so because, as the mediating and non-essentializing expression, *to hŏti* [*tŌ Ōti; das »Daß<<*; ‘this something’] implies,²⁶ there is still an *àrkhé* [*εrc<<*], viz. a hidden and tacitly agreed ‘principle,’ a ground of living together which is supposed to guide ethical-moral conduct each and everyone and, therefore, immediately relevant to the discussion of matter at hand, no matter how diffuse and historically determinate it could be and how often it is violated by those who are ‘uncanny,’ ‘clever,’ and eventually ‘harmful’ [*deinŏtes; deinŌthj*]²⁷ for both the personal and common good of others. Now the question is whether modern works of art are still capable of issuing appeals to such effect. The matter, and especially the question concerning *deinŏtes* [*deinŌthj*], gets further complicated,²⁸ not easily resolvable by customary binary reasoning

²⁵25. The following articles by Gadamer in both in the original and translation lay, in part, the basis for my discussion concerning ethical dimension: »Das Ontologische Problem des Wertes [1971]«, **Kleine Schriften, IV: Variationen** (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1977): 205-217; »Probleme der praktischen Vernunft [1980]«, **Gesammelte Werke, Band 2: [Hermeneutik II]** (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993): 319-329; »Die Idee der praktischen Philosophie [1983]«, **Gesammelte Werke, Band 10: [Hermeneutik im Rückblick]** (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995): 238-246; »Ethos und Ethik (MacIntyre u.a.) [1985]«, **Gesammelte Werke, Band 3: [Neuere Philosophie I]** (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987): 350-374; and especially, “Aristotle and the Ethic of Imperatives,” **Action and Contemplation: Studies in the Moral and Political Thought of Aristotle**, ed. by Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999): 53-67 [orig. as »Aristoteles und die imperativische Ethik [1989]«, **Gesammelte Werke, Band 7: [Griechische Philosophie III]** (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991): 381-395] and “The Problem of Intelligence,” **The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age**, tr. by Jason Geiger ve Nicholas Walker (London: Polity Press, 1996): 45-60 [orig. as »Zum Problem der Intelligenz<<, **Über die Verborgenheit der Gesundheit** (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993): 65-83.].

²⁶26. One is curiously reminded here of Adorno’s deployment of the Greek saying *tŏde ti* [*tŌde ti*], meaning “this something” with respect to the relation between the universal and the particular in art, as in the example of Dadaists’ subscribing to universality behind such childish motto: “Art must contract to the geometrical point of the absolute *tŌde ti* and go beyond it. [*Sie muß über den Punkt des absoluten tŌde ti hinaus, zu dem sie sich zusammenziehen muß.*]” from the section, ‘Universal and Particular’ [*Allgemeines und Besonderes*] in the “Draft Introduction” [*Frühe Einleitung*] to his posthumously published **Aesthetic Theory**: 351. / **Ästhetische Theorie**: 522.

²⁷27. Gadamer does not hesitate to apply this ‘fear provoking’ Greek word to all-too-familiar, and therefore uncanny conditions of the modern life: “In politics, for example, this is the unprincipled exponent of immediacy, in economic life the financial opportunist who is not to be trusted, and in the social realm it is the confidence trickster [*in der Politik der gesinnungslose Opportunist, im Wirtschaftsleben der Konjunkturritter, dem nicht zu trauen ist, im gesellschaftlichen Bereich der Hochstapler usw.*]”, “The Problem of Intelligence,”: 48. / »Zum Problem der Intelligenz<<: 69.

as soon as one is reminded of the distant common origin [*tékhnē* (**tšcnh**)] of both the realm of modern art (*die Kunst*) and the now-amorphous sphere of modern technology (*die Technik*).

Considering this distant common origin, namely, *tékhnē* [**tšcnh**], the question concerning the power and moral *Diktat* and the moral spell cast by the works of art on modern individuals in their everydayness [*der ganze Mensch*] and compelling them to leave their individual shells and be with humanity [*Menschen ganz*] –albeit briefly- turns out to be a problematical one. The fearful quality of man's *Dasein* to which both Gadamer and Heidegger before him have drawn our attention, i.e. *deinótes* [**deinŌthj**] emerges, in fact, as the dark side of *tékhnē* [**tšcnh**] and, by the same token, of both modern technology and modern art the distant roots of which can be traced back to this common origin.

Once again, as Gadamer noted, Heidegger, who is fully aware of the danger residing in moral lessons and ethical blueprints²⁹ had already addressed this 'essentially unanswerable' question (Gadamer) in the second half of the 1930s, further drawing attention to the role played by

²⁸28. My reservation with respect to the positive light Gadamer sheds on such Greek words of moral import as *phronésis* [**fron»sij**], *sophrosuné* [**sofrosun**], and *proairesis* [**proa...resij**] is that these words in Ancient Greeks' usage often pointed at a calculating thinking and cleverness dictated by the exigencies of various situations in different contexts and at different times. Cf. Peter Green, "War and Morality in Fifth-Century Athens: The Case of Euripides' *Trojan Women*" **The Ancient History Bulletin**, XIII/33 (1999): 97-110 and John R. Wilson, "*Sophrosyne* in Thucydides" **The Ancient History Bulletin**, IV/3 (1990): 51-57. Even a word of philosophical value, *sophía* [**sof...a**], was no exception, as the word and its cognates were deployed as 'cunning' and 'craftiness' e.g. in Homer, *Iliad*, Book 15, lines 410-415 as well as in nearly twenty places throughout Herodotus' **Histories**.

²⁹29. The most typical example is his well-known »Brief über den >Humanismus< « in M. Heidegger, **Wegmarken**, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1996): 313-364. / "Letter on Humanism," **Basic Writings**, expanded ed. by D. Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, Pubs., 1993): 217-265. For example: "Because we are speaking against 'values' people are horrified at a philosophy that ostensibly dares to despise humanity's best qualities. For what is more 'logical' than that a thinking that denies values must necessarily pronounce everything valueless? (346/249)...People hear talk about 'humanism,' 'logic,' 'values,' 'world,' and 'God.' They hear something about opposition to these. They recognize and accept these things as positive. But with hearsay —in a way that is not strictly deliberate— they immediately assume that what speaks against something is automatically its negation and that this is 'negative' in the sense of destructive. (347/249-250) ...To think against 'values' is not to maintain that everything interpreted as 'a value'—'culture,' 'art,' 'science,' 'human dignity,' 'world,' 'God'—is valueless...Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does not let beings: be [*Alles Werten ist, auch wo es positiv wertet, eine Subjektivierung. Es läßt das Seiende nicht: sein, ...*]...To think against values therefore does not mean to beat the drum for the valuelessness and the nullity of beings." (349/251). In fact, Fred Dallmayr has recently emphasized the hidden dimension of ethics in Heidegger's way of thinking which is too often overlooked by his critics; cf. **The Other Heidegger** (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993) Chap. 4: "Heidegger on Ethics and Justice": 106-131; 109 and 130 in particular. If the so-called non-western ways of thinking is considered in relation to "overcoming [*Überwindung/Verwindung*] Western metaphysics" Heidegger sets as his task of thinking "Being" which, in turn, is neither a God nor a cosmic plan (»*Das >Sein<-- das ist nicht Gott und nicht ein Weltgrund*«, p.331 in **Wegmarken**), it is inevitable that ethics will be part of this endeavour. The question of immediate relevance is, however, "art" as commonly understood today is a potent force to that end. Regarding *ethos*, which is immediately relevant to our discussion, Heidegger deploys here the Herakleitean fragment (Diels-Kranz, No. 119: **Ἄqoj ἐνqρῆpwi da...mwn**) usually translated as "a man's character is his daimon", however warning us that such translation thinks in a modern way and does not do justice to the original Greek one and adding: "*Ἔθος* means abode, dwelling place. The word names the open region in which man dwells [**Ἄqoj** *bedeutet Aufenthalt, Ort des Wohnens. Das Wort nennt den offenen Bezirk, worin der Mensch wohnt.*]." "Letter on Humanism," **Basic Writings**: 256. / »Brief über den >Humanismus< «, **Wegmarken**: 354.

tékhnē [tšcnh] in complicating the matter: one salient example, is his reworked lecture of 1935 summer semester, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, he makes the following chilling remark in the second phase of his radical interpretation of chorus lines 332-75 in *Antigone* of Sophocles, highlighting the essential ground of both the “fearful” and “uncanny” [*Unheimlich*; tò deinón (**deinŌn**)] in man’s *Dasein* as well as why man is taken to be the “most fearful” and “violent” [*Unheimlichste*; tò deinótaton (**tŌ deinŌtaton**)]:

“The power, the powerful, in which the action of the violent one moves, is the entire scope of the machination <*Machenschaft*>, *machanoen* [**tŌ maanŌen**], entrusted to him. We do not take the word ‘machination’ in a disparaging sense. We have in mind something essential that is disclosed to us in the Greek word *technē*. *Technē* means neither art [*die Kunst*] nor skill [*die Fertigkeit*], to say nothing of technique [*die Technik*] in the modern sense. We translate *technē* by ‘knowledge.’ [*Wir übersetzen tšcnh durch »Wissen«.*] But this requires explanation. Knowledge [*das Wissen*] means here not the result of mere observations concerning previously unknown data. [*über das vordem unbekannte Vorhandene*] Such information [*solche Kenntnisse*], though indispensable for knowledge [*für das Wissen*], is never more than accessory. [*das Beiwerk*]”³⁰ [hereafter bracketed originals and emphases by the present author.]

Note that Heidegger, while distinguishing between *das Wissen* (knowledge) and *die Kenntnis* (information) in the passage above, resists also reducing *tékhnē* [tšcnh] without qualification to even such exalted meaning as “Art” [*die Kunst*]. This is made clearer shortly in the same passage:

“Knowledge is the ability to put into work the being of any particular essent [*Seiende*]. The Greeks called art [*die Kunst*] in the true sense and the work of art [*das Kunstwerk*] *technē*, because art is what most immediately brings being (i.e. the appearing that stands there in itself) to stand, stabilizes it in something present (the work) [*weil die Kunst das Sein, d. h. das in sich dastehende Erscheinen, am unmittelbarsten in einem Anwesenden (im Werk) zum stehen bringt*]. The work of art [*Das Werk der Kunst*] is a work not primarily because it is wrought <*gewirkt*>, made [*gemacht ist*], but because it brings about <*er-wirkt*> being in an essent [*das Sein in einem Seienden*]; it brings about the phenomenon in which the emerging power, *physis*, comes to shine [*Er-wirken heiß hier ins Werk bringen, worin als dem Erscheinenden das waltende Aufgehen, die fŪsij, zum Scheinen kommt*].”³¹

Here, again, *die Erscheinung* (appearing; *eidos* [**e• doj**] in Greek) and *der Schein* should be carefully considered here, not only in the variations of meaning of especially the latter term as discussed by Heidegger, but also in terms of the latter’s swaying power today, despite its low status of being a shadowy semblance and dissimulation (especially in the eyes of those judging from the vantage-point of supposedly ‘high-brow art’³²), as a stand-in for the former, producing ‘illusions.’³³

³⁰30. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. Ralph Manheim (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1961): 133-34. / *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1953): 121-22.

³¹31. *Ibid.*: 134 / 122.

³²32. For Adorno, it is this high art itself as “bourgeois religion of art [*bürgerlichen Kunstreligion*, as a moment of what Gadamer would call *spätbürgerliche Bildungsreligion*]” or “serious art [*seriösen Kunst*]” which carried

This danger radiating from *tékhne* is again underlined in a seminar of 1937/38 winter semester:

“**Tšcnh** [*tékhne*] does not mean ‘technology’ [»Technik«] in the sense of the mechanical ordering of beings [*maschinenhaften Einrichtung des Seienden*], nor does it mean art [*Kunst* (!!)] in the sense of mere skill and proficiency [*bloße Fertigkeit und Geschicklichkeit*] in procedures and operations. **Tšcnh** [*tékhne*] means knowledge [*ein Erkennen* (a way of ‘knowing’?!!)]: know-how in processes [*das Sichauskennen im Vorgehen*] against beings (and in the encounter with beings [*Begegnung mit dem Seienden*]), i.e. against **fŮsij** [*phŷsis*].”³⁴

In this text which, incidentally, parallels the text of his *Beiträge* which was written at the time, however, Heidegger curiously substitutes the verb, *Erkennen* (knowing) in the place of *Wissen* (knowledge) for his broad characterization of *tékhne* [**tšcnh**]. Why does he do that? An enigma. Moreover and to add to our surprise, we are a little later faced with a serious warning concerning the nature of **tšcnh** [*tékhne*], which may be more than “the sur-plus of *phŷsis*, through which *phŷsis* ‘deciphers’ and presents itself.”³⁵

“This basic attitude [*Grundhaltung*] toward **fŮsij** [*phŷsis*], **tšcnh** [*tékhne*], as the carrying out of the necessity and need of wonder [*Vollzug der Notwendigkeit der Not des Erstaunens*], is at the same time, however, the ground upon which arises **Đmo...wsij** [*hómoiosis*], the transformation of **ēlŷqeia** [*ālētheia*] as concealedness into correctness. In other words, in carrying out the basic disposition [*Grundstimmung*] itself there resides the danger of its disturbance and destruction [*die Gefahr ihrer Verstörung und Zerstörung*]. For in the essence of **tšcnh** [*tékhne*], as required by **fŮsij** [*phŷsis*] itself, as the occurrence and establishment of the unconcealment of being [*als des vorgehenden und einrichtenden Waltenlassens der*

the seeds of Kitsch and eventually yielded to latter’s (ir?)resistible rise. “What once was art can later become kitsch”, says Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*: particularly 314-15. / *Ästhetische Theorie*: 466-67.

³³33. “*Der Schein*” is discussed in Heidegger’s *Einführung in die Metaphysik* in its three fundamental meanings; see, **An Introduction to Metaphysics**: 84-5. / **Einführung in die Metaphysik**: 76). In this respect, Heidegger also provides telling contrasts, for example, with today’s cult of ‘celebrity’ and subjectivized appreciation of ‘beauty’ [**An Introduction...**: 87, 111. / **Einführung...**: 78, 100-101]. As V. Gordon Childe perceptively notes, “Illusions are experiences common to all men and in that sense public. Delusions, however, are private.” Yet this is no ground for pessimism; in spite of all the collective illusions as well as delusions of individuals’ private lives experiencing privation, “Every reproduction of the external world, constructed and used as a guide to action by an historical society, must in some degree correspond to that reality. Otherwise the society could not have maintained itself; its members, if acting in accordance with totally untrue propositions, would not have succeeded in making even the simplest tools and in securing therewith food and shelter from the external world.” **Society and Knowledge** (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1956): 114, 108-9. Last but not the least, for Adorno, it is this very high art itself which carried the seeds of *Kitsch* (which, interestingly, did not crop up in the French language, as Adorno notes) and eventually yielded to latter’s (ir?)resistible rise; as we already emphasized, with respect to the holding-sway of *der Schein* in our day, Adorno underlines how spirit a.k.a culture is ‘neutralized,’ offering “its wares in a selection for *highbrows*, *middlebrows*, and *lowbrows*” today. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*: 314. / *Ästhetische Theorie*: 466.

³⁴34. Martin Heidegger, **Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected “Problems” of “Logic”**, tr. by R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992): 154. / **Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte »Probleme« der »Logik«**, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1984): 179. [Heidegger’s emphasis]

³⁵35. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, **Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political**, tr. by Chris Turner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990): 69.

Unverborgenheit des Seienden], there lies the possibility of *arbitrariness* [*Eigenmächtigen*], of an unbridled positing of goals [*losgebundenen Zwecksetzung*] and thereby the possibility of escape out of the necessity of the primordial need [*der anfänglichen Not*].”³⁶

In this basic and yet highly general assessment of the distant origin (i.e. **tšcnh** [*tékhne*]) of both modern technology and modern art, on one hand, and the fearful reality of the displacement of art by today’s technological progress,³⁷ on the other, one cannot but help to think of the possibility that the works of art may not have been hermetically sealed from the effect of *tò deinón* which today lies at the heart of modern technology [*Technik*], and further, this may have been the case in art at all times and not solely under the conditions of today’s *Kulturindustrie*. Here, a key-concept Heidegger deploys to characterize the essence of modern technology (which is nothing technological) acquires special importance, namely the concept of *Ge-stell* (enframing) which, in Petzet’s words “designates the sum total of posing-positing-establishing of the calculative thinking of ‘technics.’ In *Ge-stell* ‘things are preestablished (posited in advance), without letting them appear or unfold in all their disclosing possibilities.”³⁸

It should by now be perfectly clear what is at stake here. Having already emphasized the autonomy of the work of art having its own principle of objectivity without any recourse to any science of art [*Kunstwissenschaft*], the question now becomes if this, too, is a thing of the past, *viz.* the only domain where things are claimed to refuse to yield to objectification as demanded by *Ge-stell* and hence preserve in the autonomy of art “their disclosing possibilities. we may shortly dwell on an already traversed domain: i.e. the position of the artist/producer with respect to the work of art once it is out ‘there’ with its own inner tensions and motions facing the recipient. Here we are not going to dwell on the contemporary myth of ‘Genius’ and ‘Creativity,’³⁹ yet it is highly significant to underline again the work-character of the

³⁶36. Martin Heidegger, **Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected “Problems” of “Logic**: 155. / **Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte »Probleme« der »Logik«**: 180. [Heidegger’s emphases]

³⁷37. Consider the following passage from a letter by Heidegger sent to Petzet referring to a universal tendency via the particular work of the artist Heinrich Vogeler: “This artist and the attempt he made with his work follow the essential destiny (*Geschick*) in which great art is no longer the necessary form for the presentation of the absolute-as Hegel saw it-and is therefore without a place. Its refuge today is the babbling turmoil in the dilapidated shack called ‘society.’ In a superficial sense, the artist is driven to communism by ‘love for humans.’ But in truth it is terror, hidden even from himself, in the face of the end of art that was to found a world, in the era in which metaphysics is dissolved in a universal technology. Heinrich Vogeler’s love for humans wanders around worldlessly in an age of a will to power that breaks out to extremes.” quoted in Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, **Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger, 1929-1976**, tr. by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993 [orig. 1983]): 140; cf. 145-46 and, especially, 146-47.

³⁸38. Petzet, **Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger**: note 3 to Chp. 3, 232. Even more importantly, cf. also M. Heidegger, “Technik und Kunst—Ge-stell,” **Kunst und Technik: Gedächtnisschrift zum 100. Geburtstag von Martin Heidegger**, Herausgegeben von Walter Biemel und Friedrich-Wilhelm v. Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989): XIII-XIV.

³⁹39. “Creation is not making something out of nothing, but refashioning what already is. Any creative process, whether the painting of a picture, the composition of a symphony or the elaboration of a logical argument, illustrates precisely this combination of continuity and determinacy with flexibility and freedom.” **Society and Knowledge**: 124; 126. Childe’s statement rings very true once *tékhne* [**tšcnh**] is taken as a *Wissen* (or as *Erkennen*) as Heidegger claims (see above). Max Horkheimer, too, has pointed out such quality with

work of art in its free presenting, *viz.* in its autonomy from both its creator and the receiving end (observer). Once again, it suffices to give the the brilliant summary by Gadamer himself concerning the artist's end:

“ ‘Work’ [*Werk*] does not mean anything different from the Greek word ‘*ergon*’. It is characterized—just like ‘*ergon*’—by the fact that it is detached both from the producer and the activity of production. This points to an ancient Platonic problem: The design of a particular thing does not depend on who makes it but on who is to use it. This applies to all work, particularly to works of art. Of course, a work of art, unlike an object of handicraft, is not made for a designated use but rather is suspended from use and consequently from misuse. It stands, so to speak, only for itself and in itself. Now this is decisive for dealing with the question at hand concerning the intention of the author. When it comes to a work of art, it could be said that the intention has, so to speak, ‘gone into’ the work, and can no longer be sought behind it or before it. This sharply limits the value of all biographical insights related to a work of art, as well as those associated with the history of its origins. Works of art are detached from their origins and just because of this, begin to speak—perhaps surprising even their creators.”⁴⁰

If that is still really the case, namely the works of art are in fact “there” [»*Da*«] and refusing to submit to the wills of both their creators and recipients alike, and, further, making their silent claim, their “command” [*das Diktat*]⁴¹ on the receiving side, does it still have the power of

respect to the works of art, saying: “Human beings are free to recognize themselves in works of art in so far as they have not succumbed to the general leveling. The individual’s experience embodied in a work of art has no less validity than the organized experience society brings to bear for the control of nature. Although its criterion lies in itself alone, art is knowledge no less than science is.” “Art and Mass Culture,” **Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung**, Jahrgang 9 (1941): 290. [emphasis added]. Moreover, we can note in passing Marcel Proust’s remark (letter to a certain Rosny Aigné, June 14, 1921) may be of some relevance: “I believe that, if we could talk together, we would find that our theories do not greatly differ. You say that a work of art reflects its author; and that is absolutely true. But that author is not altogether identical with the ‘man’ displayed to his contemporaries.” [quoted from **Correspondance de Marcel Proust**, Tome XX (1921) in **The Times Literary Supplement**, No. 4731 (Dec. 3, 1993): 4.] Here there is certainly a gap between the producer and producer as man. But we haven’t even come to the recipient’s end of the matter which, in itself presents one with formidable problems. Yet the “[g]enius is diligence [*Genie ist fleiß.*]” as the saying quoted by Adorno goes, in order to underline the necessary patience that goes with every serious work toward its subject matter [*an der Geduld zur Sache*]. T. W. Adorno, “Notes on Philosophical Thinking,” **Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords**: 130. / »Anmerkungen zum philosophischen Denken «, **Stichworte: Kritische Modelle 2**: 151-168).

⁴⁰40. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Hermeneutics and Logocentrism,” **Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter**, ed. by Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989): 123.

⁴¹41. Gadamer states elsewhere that he prefers the word “*Gebilde*” (creation) to “*Werk*” (work) in order to avoid possible utilitarian misunderstandings that are associated with the latter term; cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Relevance of the Beautiful: Art as play, Symbol, and festival,” **The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays**: 33. / “Die Aktualität des Schönen. Kunst als Spiel, Symbol und Fest” (1974), **Gesammelte Werke, Band 8**: 124. In fact, “*Gebilde*” still points to a “*Werk*” in terms of a “gathering” (*Sammlung*), as is indicated in note 45, p. 174 of the English translation. I think this view is strengthened by a note in G. H. R. Parkinson, “Lukács on the Central Category of Aesthetics” where Parkinson, referring to Lukács’ criteria of distinguishing artworks, correctly claims that the “term translated as ‘images’ [*Gebilde*] is not defined by Lukács, but clearly does not refer to mental images. It seems to be equivalent to ‘works of art,’ and is perhaps used to bring out their picture – [*Bild*] like character.” See **Georg Lukács: The Man, his work and his ideas**: Note 1 to p. 121. This is further supported by Gadamer’s statement *à la* Paul Klee, that the “modern artist is

an ethical call, no matter how indirect it may be? After all these necessary detours and digressions under historical-societal conditions where old myths take on new appearances while the proliferation of ethical babbling is no more than “idle talk” [*das Gerede*], can today’s art contribute through its works anything ‘ethical’ beyond and above today’s “Christian-moralistic-psychological” [*christlich-moralisch-psychologisch*] way of submissiveness that has its roots in a “medieval...Arabic-Jewish-Christian way [*mittelalterlich, arabisch-jüdisch-christlich verstanden*].”⁴² In short, can one sense the possibility of a new beginning on the horizon through the medium art today?

A difficult question to which no ready-made answer exists. In an age where the heavy fog of ‘boredom’ as well as ‘intoxication’ (both of which characterized the bourgeois life as an antinomy since at least Schopenhauer)⁴³ can only be dispelled by the “work,”⁴⁴

less a creator than a discoverer of the as yet unseen, the inventor of the previously unimagined that only emerges into reality through him. [*Der moderne Künstler ist weit weniger Schöpfer als Entdecker von Ungesehenem, ja Erfinder von noch nie Dagewesenem, das wie durch ihn hindurch einrückt in die Wirklichkeit des Seins*]” “The Speechless Image”: 91. / »Vom Verstummen des Bildes«: 234. Remarkable, on the other hand is the “fact that the Greek word for picture [*Bild*] (*zoon*) originally meant a living being [*Lebewesen*] shows how little mere things [*bloße Dinge*] and nature without man were thought worthy of pictorial representation [*bildwürdig*] at all.” **Ibid.**: 84. / 228. For >*Gebilde*< essentially meaning >*Werk*< see also notes 4 and 8 above. The silent “command” (*Diktat*) emanating from the works of art is in need of qualification, however, and particularly in the sense of the work that speaks and those who listen need to be equals. If the work of art is the “absolute present for each present” [*»daß es für die jeweilige Gegenwart absolute Gegenwart ist...«*] and simultaneously pointing at possible futures. See further, “Aesthetics and Hermeneutics,” **Philosophical Hermeneutics**: 104. / »Ästhetik und Hermeneutik« [1964], **Gadamer Lesebuch**: 119. For further elaboration of the “*Diktat*” see, John Pizer, “*Diktat* or Dialogue? On Gadamer’s Concept of the Artwork’s Claim,” **Philosophy and Literature**, XII/2 (October 1988): 272-79.

⁴²42. Martin Heidegger, **Basic Questions of Philosophy**: 151; also 185 [From the first draft] / **Grundfragen der Philosophie**: 175; also 221 [*Aus dem ersten Entwurf*]; On a passing note on the “particular interpretation of Arabic philosophy” [*eine bestimmte Interpretation der arabischen Philosophie*] in the chain of historical transformation leading to our techno-scientific age, cf. also his **The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World-Finitude-Solitude**, tr. by W. McNeill and N. Walker, Bloomington: Indiana 1929-30 University Press, 1995: 43. / **Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt-Endlichkeit-Einsamkeit**, Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1983: 65.

⁴³43. Lukács, most probably also having in mind the recent cultural-political events of the decade of 60s, writes in a late preface (March 1965; rev. April 1970) to a collection of his literary essays: “What is important in both cases [‘boredom’ and ‘intoxication’. H.Ü.N.] is that the apparently unbridgeable antithesis disguises a deep inner association and reciprocal extension and support. One overcomes ennui as little through intoxication (one is even impelled back into its sphere) as one is liberated by shock from manipulated alienation, for shock merely groups, concentrates and conserves the characteristic moral features of this alienation. In both cases it is a question therefore of constantly repeated emotional revolts concealing, for all practical purposes, the desire *quieta non movere*, to leave inviolate the bases of this pair of opposites. The Italian writer Italo Svevo, whose fame rests on his association with Joyce, expressly declared that protest is the shortest road to resignation.” Georg Lukács, **Writer & Critic and Other Essays**, ed. and tr. by Arthur D. Kahn (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971): Lukács’ Preface, p. 13.

⁴⁴44. We learn from a letter written by Charles Baudelaire (May 1864, Brussels) to Michel Lévy, the publisher of his translations from Edgar Allan Poe, that “work” is strictly understood in this fashion and, no doubt, taking place in precious freedom: “Ah, my dear Michel, how bored I am here! How bored I am! I truly believe that no matter which country one finds himself in, only work can prevent boredom.” Quoted in Roger Pearson’s review article, “Artificial paradises,” **The Times Literary Supplement**, No. 5117 (April 27, 2001). 8. On the question of “boredom,” see my “Time-Consumption and Boredom in the Modern Times” (forthcoming in “**S**” **European Journal for Semiotic Studies**)

particularly through the so-called ‘works of art’ in the limited space of ‘freedom’ left to us, the moderns, Heidegger’s half-answer may very well ring true:

“Only if we know that we do not yet know who we are do we ground the one and *only* ground which may release the *future* of a simple, essential existence [*Dasein*] of historical man from itself.

This ground is the essence of truth. This essence must be prepared in thought in the transition to another beginning. For the future, the situation of the powers which ground the truth in the first place, namely poetry (and consequently art in general) and thinking, will be quite different than it was in the first [i.e. Greek, HÜN] beginning. Poetry will not be first, but in the transition the *forerunner* will have to be *thinking*. Art, however, will be for the future the putting into work of truth (or it will be nothing), i.e., it will be *one* essential grounding of the essence of truth. According to this highest standard, anything that would present itself as art must be measured as a way of letting truth come *into being* in these beings, which, as *works*, enchantingly transport man into the intimacy of Being while imposing on him the luminosity of the unconcealed and disposing him and determining him to be the custodian of the truth of Being.”⁴⁵

Distant sound of a piper at the gates of dawn? Perhaps. Or just some modern oracle, simply giving signs? Likely.

⁴⁵45. Heidegger’s other emphases are additionally supplied for the English translation of the passage above in **Basic Questions of Philosophy**: 163-64. For comparison, therefore, I am again providing the original passage in German: »Erst wenn wir wissen, daß wir noch nicht wissen, wer wir sind, gründen wir den *einzigsten* Grund, der die *Zukunft* eines einfachen, wesentlichen Daseins des geschichtlichen Menschen aus sich zu entlassen vermag. / Dieser Grund ist das Wesen der Wahrheit. Dieses Wesen muß im Übergang zum anderen Anfang denkerisch vorbereitet werden. Anders als im ersten Anfang ist künftig das Verhältnis der Mächte, die zuerst die Wahrheit gründen, der Dichtung – und somit der Kunst überhaupt - und das Denkens. Nicht die Dichtung ist das erste, sondern *Wegbereiter* muß im Übergang das *Denken* sein. Die Kunst ist aber künftig – oder sie ist gar nicht mehr - das Ins-Werk-setzen der Wahrheit – *eine* wesentliche Gründung des Wesens der Wahrheit. Nach diesem höchsten Maß ist Jegliches zu messen, was als Kunst auftrefen möchte – als der Weg, die Wahrheit seined werden zu lassen in jenem Seienden, das als *Werk* den Menschen in die Innigkeit des Seyns entzückt, indem es ihn aus der Leuchte des Unverhüllten berückt und so zum Wächter der Wahrheit des Seyns stimmt und bestimmt«, **Grundfragen der Philosophie**: 190.