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By: Kristen R. Lewis

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Dr. Bela Egyed — Chair

Dr. Emilia Angelova — Examiner

Examiner

Dr. David Morris — Thesis Supervisor(s)

Thesis Supervisor(s)

Approved by Dr. Matthias Fritsch, GPD — Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

Dr. Pascale Sicotte, Dean

The Future of Hegel's Art: Extending Hegelian Aesthetics for Contemporary Artforms

Kristen R. Lewis

Under the supervision of
Dr. David Morris

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[1] Lispector, Clarice, 1977. *The Hour of the Star*. Translated by Benjamin Moser. New York: New Directions. xvi.

Contents

Abstract

This paper attempts to extend Hegelian aesthetic philosophy to account for contemporary artforms beyond those that Hegel identifies within the *Aesthetics*. It does so by offering a corrective interpretation of the so-called 'end of art' thesis, which claims that for Hegel after a certain point art ends, e.g., in favour of philosophy. The paper argues against this view by reading Hegel's aesthetic philosophy phenomenologically. This preserves art as an indispensable form of absolute spirit. In fact, this paper claims that Hegel's aesthetic philosophy unfolds in an examination of art that parallels the developments of material art production after Hegel, showing how this art production becomes increasingly conceptual and anthropomorphic, in ways that fit with Hegel's views of artistic development. As such, this paper argues that Hegel's philosophy not only preserves art as a relevant form of absolute spirit, but is an indispensable resource for examining novel artforms.

But the work of art is not so naively self-centered; it is essentially a question, an address to the responsive breast, a call to the mind and the spirit.

—GWF Hegel, *Aesthetics*

Life seemed so important to me, infinitely more important than the work of art, because without it where would there be the awareness of the work itself?

—Lygia Clark, 1964

If gestures are carried artistically to such a degree of expression that words can be dispensed with, then we have pantomime which, in that case, turns the rhythmic movement of *poetry* into a rhythmic and pictorial movement of *limbs*.

—GWF Hegel, *Aesthetics*

Introduction

In this paper I examine Hegel's aesthetic philosophy with the aim of extending it to account for contemporary forms of art making. Scholarly work on Hegel's aesthetic philosophy often emphasizes the so-called Hegelian 'end of art,' where Hegel is presumed to have declared the end of genuine art production. This has led to a somewhat conservative examination of Hegel's aesthetic philosophy which, with a few exceptions, extends analysis only to artforms that Hegel considers in the two volume *Aesthetics*. This prompts the question of whether Hegel's aesthetic philosophy can account for contemporary artforms: is Hegel's aesthetic philosophy relegated to analysis solely of the traditional mediums Hegel himself identifies as art? Or can Hegel's aesthetic philosophy account for novel methods of creation—such as found art, conceptual art, performance art, or participatory art—that occupies a large share of contemporary artwork? My aim in this paper is to argue for the contemporary relevance of Hegel's aesthetic philosophy and to demonstrate how Hegel's work is a rich resource for examining novel forms of artistic creation despite its usual association with art's ostensible ending.

In section I I provide an expository exegesis of how Hegel conceives of art and its role in experience. I begin by tracing the universal character of art within the Hegelian system as outlined in the *Aesthetics*. Following this, I briefly explain the three subdivided particular forms of art through which Hegel classifies art, as symbolic, classical, and romantic. This lets me trace arts dynamic developmental process, according to Hegel. As I understand it, the final form of romantic art (and what follows from its dissolution as the postromantic) is expressive of our current relationship with art and as such I give specific emphasis to this third form. Hegel's account of the particular forms of art takes up historical, empirical art mediums as exemplars. In romantic art, dramatic poetry reigns as the ideal. I thus trace the character and function of dramatic poetry as Hegel understands it, working through its further subdivisions of tragedy, comedy, and drama, to provide an exegetical groundwork from which my subsequent theoretical argument launches. At the end of this section, I also highlight an internal progression within Hegel's *Aesthetics* where art becomes increasingly conceptual and anthropomorphic or lively (*Lebendig*). I do so to argue that on these grounds Hegel's work has in fact become more important as art production assumes a similar course of development.

In section II I tackle first the widespread misconception fueling the Hegelian 'end of art' debate. An influential reading of the 'end of art' thesis claims that Hegel expresses a genuine end to art production to make way for religion and philosophy as pursuits better suited to fulfilling the universal needs that art sensuously provides. I begin by examining the erroneousness of the 'end of art' claims, locating their origins, and offering a corrective interpretation of the Hegelian passages often quoted as support for such claims. I draw from the theoretical work of Robert Pippin (2014) and Benjamin Rutter (2010) in particular to support my position, namely drawing from their move to argue against 'end of art' claims grounded in a historical model of sublation,

favouring a phenomenological understanding, or spiritual model of sublation. Following this I explore the possibility of a Hegelian 'after of art' where I argue that Hegel's theoretical work on art remains a pertinent and rich resource for examining art, not just of the past, but of the present and foreseeable future. I argue against accounts which have either mobilized Hegel's aesthetics to critique contemporary art (Fowkes, 1978) or misconstrued the relevant part of Hegel's aesthetic philosophy necessary for contemporary analysis (Di Summa Knoop, 2013).

Section III turns to the historical development of art after Hegel to argue that Hegel's aesthetic philosophy fits into this historic arc and remains a relevant resource for understanding novel art creation. To effectuate such an argument, I return to the themes of art's increasing conceptuality and anthropomorphism within the *Aesthetics*, to demonstrate how these themes have only intensified in significance in art's post-Hegelian historic development. While modernism introduces a paradigmatic shift in how we conceive of art, marking a turn to art that is more self-conscious, conceptual, and anthropomorphic, contemporary postmodern art only amplifies these thematic concerns through the development of new art methods and mediums. I turn to the work of participatory artist, Lygia Clark, to capture this thematic development and argue for Hegel's contemporary aesthetic relevance. Clark's artwork upholds the principles of Hegelian comedic poetry, as art's most concrete expression within the *Aesthetics*, by centralizing an indifference to the pure beauty of the artwork's sensuous externality to instead emphasize the experience the sensuous configuration of the artwork enables for those participating in its live creation. In this way I argue that art does not end but develops by incorporating greater forms of abstraction within the realm of art itself, centralizing experience and enabling recognition of one's human freedom through these novel forms of creation. If my understanding is correct, I contest erroneous accounts in scholarship which misconstrue Hegel's 'end of art' thesis in terms

of a historical sublation and I thereby extend Hegel's own consideration of art to accommodate novel forms of contemporaneous art creation, namely participatory art.

I: Art and Romantic Art for Hegel

a. Art 'as such'

To advance my own thesis that Hegel's understanding of art remains pertinent to contemporary art production, I must first clarify how Hegel conceives of art. Following this I will turn to what Hegel calls romantic art, to support my argument in section III that romantic art is expressive of our current situation of self-understanding and thus accounts for contemporary practices of artmaking. It should be noted, at the outset, that Hegel does not provide an aesthetic philosophy *per se*.[1] That is, while the tradition of German aesthetics that led to Hegel's philosophy of art considered art on purely aesthetic grounds, analysing art with respect to aesthetic experience, theories of taste, and the sufficient and necessary conditions for defining art, Hegel's steers away from these traditional aesthetic concerns in his 1820 lectures to emphasize, instead, the role art plays in experience (Hegel 1975, *A* I: 1).[2] What is central to Hegel's philosophy of art is art's meaningful content over its formal presentation.[3]

For Hegel, the content of art, what he calls art's 'inner shape,' is the freedom of *Geist* or 'spirit' (*A* I:95). Hegel understands freedom as a key power of human subjectivity, the distinctly human capacity for attaining and maintaining a self-understanding (in relation to others), as opposed to what Hegel calls nature, which is restricted in this capacity (*A* I:41; 93). Hegel, while emphasizing that freedom is the central content and concern of art does not, however, do away with attention to art's formal presentation. Indeed, formal presentation, what he calls the

externalization of content, is fundamental to Hegel's understanding of art, in which content and its externalization function together in a dynamic relation (*A* I:95). While this dynamical relation is driven by art's meaningful concern and content, art's 'outer' shape, its form of presentation, is significant. This is because art's outer shape is supposed to be an adequate reflection of this inner content. In other words, for it to be *art* according to Hegel, the formal external presentation must be so interpenetrated by the meaningful content, the life of spirit, that it enables what Hegel calls spirit's 'sensuous shining' (*A* I:95, 155). In this way, art is more than an aesthetically pleasing natural object or simple product of human creation: art is an external reflection of the subjective human experience of those who create it (*A* I:31).[4]

Art, then, is a *significant* feature of human experience because it enables the 'working out' (*herausarbeiten*) of who we are and the nature of our reality, broadly what Hegel calls our freedom (*A* I:97). Unlike our everyday experience, which is occupied with more practical or political concerns, art allows us to have an experience of self-recognition where we question after truths about who we are, and what our world is (*A* I:94). Art, for Hegel, is an avenue for self-exploration and self-reflection and the practice of making art "is man's rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self" (*A* I:31). To denote this specific capacity that art has, Hegel classifies art, alongside religion and philosophy, as 'absolute spirit' where 'absolute' emphasizes this significant role that these practices have in our process of self-recognition (as arriving at nonrelative unlimited, absolute truths), and 'spirit' signifies the collective foundations (in human life, history, and experience) that enable this recognitive process (*A* I:94). Whereas what Hegel calls 'objective spirit' is concerned with fashioning external circumstances for the subsistence and realization of our finite and particular needs, the practices of 'absolute spirit' function to

satisfy our deeper needs of self-understanding, grappling with 'infinite' or universal questions of who we are that exceeds our finite particularity (*A* I:94). Art is here given a role alongside religion and philosophy because they all enable the working out of these universal concerns, our subjective freedom—but they do so in distinctive *forms*. Art's distinctive form, which sets it apart from religion and philosophy, is the working out of our freedom in concrete sensuousness, as opposed to religion which does this through 'presentation' (as a kind of representational consciousness) and philosophy through conceptual analyses (*A* I:101-104).[5]

Art 'unveils' the true nature of experience by challenging the natural ways we perceive and experience the world, which Hegel believes to be burdened by the "pure appearance and deception" of "the immediacy of sense" (*A* I:9).[6] The truth of experience is the reconciliation of ostensible contradicting dualities—that the "pure appearance" of ordinary reality is opposed to the freedom of the subjective experience of the human being—which tear the human being asunder. In our ordinary way of experiencing, we see ourselves split between the oppositions of our essential necessity and our inner freedom. However, the nature of our experience is that we are both of the objective body and world, *and* a being of subjective inwardness of identity and experience. Art enables a recognition of "the real and the true" nature of experience as the reconciliation of this opposition because "the pure appearance of art" "points through and beyond itself" (*A* I:9). We thus come to see art's meaningful content *in and through* art's external presentation. The human being "as a free subject," in making art, "strip[s] the external world of its inflexible foreignness" (*A* I:31) transforming its ordinary pure appearance into something "*spiritualized*" (*A* I:39), "bring[ing] home to our sense, our feeling, and our inspiration everything which has a place in the human spirit" (*A* I:46). For example, the rather everyday or 'banal' objects such as oil, pigment, and canvas on their own do not express an

understanding of human freedom. It is not until these common objects are manipulated by an individual trying to express something of significance, about what it is to be a self-consciousness, that they undergo a transformation, to bear the imprint of the artist, thereby expressing something significant about human experience. In the case of art, though, this accomplishment has to go through the external presentation: you grasp what the painting expresses about human freedom by looking at the pigment on canvas with your eyes, versus in your ritual practice (as in religion), or in your thinking (as in reading a philosophy book) (*A* I: 41; 101-104).

b. The Three Particular Forms of Art

Hegel classifies art in three broad particular forms, as symbolic, classical, and romantic, to express a changing relationship between the way cultures over historic time have been able to work through questions of freedom in sensible presentations. Each form of art is expressive of a different dynamic relationship between art's content and its form, where the parity of content and form expresses a more or less adequate expression of human freedom. If there is a parity of form and content, such that the external presentation of the artwork reflects the way the creative milieu of the artist understands itself in terms of their subjective freedom, then that artwork achieves a beautiful (Ideal) expression.[7] Beauty arises for Hegel when there is an effectuated self-understanding captured explicitly in and through the artwork (where this is not to be assessed by the extent that that artwork upholds merely aesthetic principles) (*A* I:153-174). Even more than the artwork reflecting an adequate self-understanding for those who create it, the artwork acts as a sort of prophetic device for the working out of this self-understanding (*A* I:438-442).[8] This is

the case in what Hegel calls classical art, and Hegel understands ancient Greece as the creative milieu that exemplifies classical art production (*A* I:436).

The artwork of the Greeks, especially their sculptures of the gods, brought to consciousness for the Greeks an understanding of who they were and what their world consisted of as their artists were the "creators of the gods" which gave them "a definite idea of the behaviour, life, and effectiveness of the Divine" (*A* I:102). Hegel understands Ancient Greece as a period wherein the citizens reflected on and understood their freedom in their daily lives, through their politics and religion (*A* I:146-7). More than this, it was their art which enunciated this understanding of freedom, providing an objective, sensuous reflection of how they understood themselves as such political and religious individuals (*A* I:146-7). In classical art, the artists reveal through their concrete expressions how one ought to live, and thus the artistic portrayals act as an arbitrator for the enactment of one's freedom (*A* I:438-442, II:710).[9]

However, the form and content of art are not always in symbiotic relation. Art begins (with its symbolic phase) and ends (in its romantic phase) with an incompatibility between art's external expression and its content, where how a people understand themselves cannot be explicitly captured in the concrete sensibility of art. Preceding the ideal parity of the classical form is symbolic art, where the search for an understanding of human freedom takes place but does not find itself reflected in sensible externality (*A* I:300). Here, cultures sought an understanding of the nature of reality, but looked too far out from themselves, and did not incorporate enough of their own being into the matter and making of art, in their representation of the 'divine'(*A* I:300).[10] What we get instead are symbolic representations that may instill a kind of wonder at the idea that freedom could be unveiled, as in the mysteriousness of the pyramids of Giza (as Hegel puts it, reflecting the views of his times); but no definite answers to

the questions of how to live well, as a free subjective being, are sensuously articulated because these artworks lack, according to Hegel, an objective form that is representative of the self (*A* I:77). Instead, symbolic art is marked by representations of natural forms which cannot, according to Hegel, express human freedom since they have not been 'worked on' by the human being so as to reflect something about the human situation and thus fail to be 'spiritualized.'[11] Thus, the form of the art is inadequate to the content, to the notion of human freedom. We may thus call this phase 'pre-art' (*Vorkunst*) and it is marked by its struggle, "its quest, its fermentation, its mysteriousness, and its sublimity" (*A* I:77).[12]

If symbolic art is 'pre-art,' and classical art is art *par excellence*, then romantic art is to be understood as 'post-art,' where form and content once again fall out of ideal parity. In romantic art the significant aspects of our existence—the 'divine' and 'absolute'—are sought and found wholly in the subjective life of the human being (*A* I:518). Romantic art presents the first turn towards a secular understanding of freedom, where instead of looking for an understanding of the significant features of existence in external gods—as is the case in symbolic and classical art—we turn into ourselves (*A* I:518). Romantic art is marked by a negation of externality for a further turning inward where the content of art, the 'divine' and 'absolute,' is found "only in [spirit's] own native spiritual world of feeling, the heart, and the inner life in general" (*A* I:518). Through the negation of ideal outer expression, the inner content of art is posited as that which is most significant, which is in this case the inwardness of subjective life (*A* I:518-519).

Insofar as the content of art is now the infinite subjective inwardness of the individual, art struggles again to find adequate external expression of its content (*A* I:526). This struggle, though, is not an unlimited longing, incapable of actualization, as in symbolic art, but an understanding of the *limitations* of expression (*A* I:526). Romantic art centralizes the incapacity

of the form of the artwork to adequately express its content (*A* I:526-529). Paradoxically, this incapacity is expressed *in and through* its determinate form, through greater forms of artistic abstraction (*A* I:526-529). By abstraction I mean the way artists express their artistic idea or understanding through indirect means, where the art is saying something important without being able to explicitly convey it (and not the Hegelian term of abstract as opposed to concrete). It is like the apophantic discourse of poetry which gets at a kind of meaning through the inability to literally express it, turning instead to metaphoric devices to articulate what is intended. If it were to be expressed explicitly, then it would not have the same kind of significance because it is only the incapacity, the infinitely meaningfulness of the situation that exceeds the finite capacity, that the meaning is approachable and thereby conveyable. The form of romantic art therefore indicates its own shortfall and through this shortfall it raises the inner content above and beyond the outer expression (*A* I:526-529).

Romantic art expresses at once a transcendence of the content (beyond the form) and a liberation from the restrictions of the form (as the "pure appearance" of sensuous expression). Rather than the sublimity of symbolic architecture or the rigidity of classical sculpture, romantic art is best captured through the works of painting, music, and poetry which rely on a cognitive and thus inward form of interpretation.[13] The inward interpretative nature of these artworks allows the concern and content of the artwork to exceed the artwork's formal constraints, enabling a subjective withdrawal from the externality into the spiritual inwardness of the human soul (*A* I:524-529). For example, when we read poetry, we interpret what the words mean beyond how they are physically aligned on a page. The aesthetic quality of the printed word is not what is of significance, it is what these words signify for us that is of concern, and this can only be gleaned by use of our interpretative capacity. In contrast, the forms of classical art, like

sculpture, express the totality of the content and meaning in its external form, thus not relying on nor necessitating the inward interpretation of the perceiver. While one may need to move around the classical sculpture to grasp the whole of its parts, one does not need to go inward to understand what is being communicated but finds the answer explicitly in the marble.

By gesturing beyond itself, romantic art allows for art to say *more*, and this excess is the unqualified infinity of the meaningful ways we are human. Thus, the content of romantic art, in theory, could be just about anything. We see this in Hegel's characterization of Dutch genre painting, where everyday items (cups, candles, tractors), and everyday affairs (eating, working in the field) are raised beyond their "pure appearance" to express the fullness of life which necessarily arises through the banalities of everyday living (*A* I:598-600). The human being is raised to a level of self-consciousness which understands itself as more than its objective circumstances, whereby the external conditions of being do not fully express the nature of what it is to be human (*A* I:598). But at once, in romantic art, we also come to understand that it is through the finite that the infinitely meaningful is revealed at all to us, because of our condition as a being of external necessity *and* having a rich inner life. This is what romantic art makes clear to us in its abstractive formulations—we are both of these things, and it is our task to illuminate this fundamental truth, and art is one way of bringing it to consciousness, for ourselves and others.

c. The Ideality of Poetry for Hegel

There is a nuanced relationship between what artform is the pinnacle of art for Hegel, and what artform best expresses our current way of understanding ourselves. While classical art is

most *ideally* art because of its parity of form and content, romantic art is the more concrete and genuine expression of art because it captures most adequately the nature of our reality as we best understand it. The way we understand ourselves now in terms of romantic art is through the incapacity of the formal objective circumstances of reality to account for the richness of what it is to be human, to be both of objective world and body but also have a subjective inner life. Artforms that are grounded in a kind of rigidity, like sculpture, which were perfect for the kind of expression required in the classical period, do not function for us any longer because we require a more fluid and dynamic means of expression which speaks to the fullness of our two-sided nature (*A* II:959).[14] For Hegel, poetry is just this kind of medium. Of all the artforms that he surveys, poetry's empirical form is best in terms of reflecting the content of romantic art because it emphasizes not the externality, but the necessary withdrawal therefrom to grasp the full significance of aesthetic expression (*A* II:959).[15] I turn to poetry, and emphasize its achieved developments through its dramatic genre, to emphasize where Hegel 'leaves us' at the end of his lectures on aesthetics. Two things are important to note when considering this terminus of Hegelian empirical art projection: art becomes increasingly conceptual, and art becomes increasingly anthropomorphic, or lively (*Lebendig*).[16]

We see poetry's conceptuality baked into its empirical structure. Poetry works with words which signify in the manner of concepts, expressing its content linguistically, which while in some ways 'concrete,' exceeds any strong foothold in a determinate space-time. A work of poetry can be taken up by anyone who can read it, and be projected 'anywhere,' so to speak. While the artist gives the broad strokes for what the artwork is to 'look' like, it is the throughgoing *imagination* of the perceiver in intimate dialogue with the moves outlined by the poet which animates the artwork, giving shape and content to otherwise static words (*A* II:961).

By working with the conceptual structure of language, "poetry cuts itself free from this importance of the material" as the "*universal* art which can shape in any way and express any subject-matter capable of entering the imagination" (*A* II:967). As this universal artform, poetry concludes art's trajectory where art first "*seeks* its adequate content, then *finds* it, and finally *transcends* it" (*A* II:967). Poetry functions as the medium of art's eventual self-transcendence, opening art up to its potential for infinite expression, as a dynamic "exploitation of every particular form" and at once a "liberation from imprisonment in any exclusive type and character of treatment and subject matter" (*A* II:967). It is through poetry, as this universal art, that art wins the capacity to have its content be the truly free "spiritual idea" as "the inner imagination and intuition itself" aided in this pursuit by the sensuous shaping power of language (*A* II:969; 964).

While poetry can be a somewhat private affair between the perceiver and the written word, it is best expressed, according to Hegel, when read and acted aloud. Thus, for Hegel, poetry achieves its most concrete expression as dramatic poetry. In dramatic enactment, words are animated by speech and given sensuous shape by the living circumstances of its orators.[17] Through the dramatic enactment and subsequent animation, "poetry lays claim to the *entire* person of the action, so that the living man himself is the material medium of expression" (*A* II:1039). Poetry dramatically enacted is the height of art's anthropomorphism, not only in a sensible manner—as the human being becomes the "material medium of expression"—but also insofar as poetry allows for the inner subjective life to be expressed through the speech emanating from the material medium, which is, in the case of poetry, a human being. Even more, the dramatic actor is rarely alone on stage, but performs alongside others (even in soliloquy the audience is there to listen and observe). Through this intersubjective relationality, we understand how our inner life develops through engagement with other people: the actor "reveals himself

effectively in his actual existence as one entire person related to others" (*A* II:1039). This is achieved through the incorporation of the corporeal body in the poetic dramatization by way of gestures, "which, just as much as speech, are a language of the inner life, demanding artistic treatment" (*A* II:1039). Even more, the temporal progression of the dramatic play gets at the idea that this is not a static process, but a dynamic and rhythmic dance that evolves over time.

Hegel further subdivides dramatic poetry into three narrower distinctions. Encapsulated in dramatic poetry are the genres of tragedy, comedy, and a vague 'drama' sometimes referred to as tragicomedy, where each genre establishes a different relationship between substance and subject. Tragedy enables a recognition of oneself as subject developed in relation to other characters, raising awareness of the contradictions that arise in the process of determining oneself in the world. Consider Sophocles *Antigone*, where Antigone is caught between her own drive to uphold the order of the family, and the ethical order advocated for by Creon's orders. However, in tragedy there is a sacrifice of the subjective self because of the contradictions that arise between various subjective characters in light of their conflictual one-sidedness. One or multiple subjects usually die because of the contradictions facing their development, and thus the contradictions are raised to consciousness, but not overcome. What re-establishes a harmony and 'eradicates' the contradictions is the 'eternal justice' of the universal substance.

Comedy similarly enlivens for the actors and audience a dynamic portrayal of the contradictions undergirding our intersubjective being in the world, by animating conflict between characters through objective humour. Comedy differs from tragedy by enabling the persistence of the self in its resolution of contradictions. What is destroyed in the resolution of the comic play "cannot be either fundamental principle or individual character" (*A* II:1201). Rather, what is destroyed are the misconceptions of the sensuous sphere which conceal contradictions. Revealed

in this comic dissolution is the real and true nature of reality as discerned by the freedom of the human being: "the comic subjective personality has become the overlord of whatever appears in the real world…the individual makes himself master of this dissolution too and remains undisturbed in himself and at ease" (*A* II:1202). With comedy, as the height of dramatic poetry, we achieve the most comprehensive understanding in art of who we are, as the nature of the 'absolute' or 'divine.' We are a corporeal body, though one containing an animated inner life of the soul, and this life is dynamically mediated by internal changes over time and by others who fashion their own subjective lives alongside ours.

It is here, with comedic poetry, that Hegel brings us to "the real end of our philosophical inquiry" on art (*A* II:1236). With the romantic form, and the comedic exemplar, spirit is "satisfied in itself" and "no longer unites itself with anything objective and particularized" because spirit "brings the negative side of this dissolution into consciousness in the humour of comedy" (*A* II:1236). Here, in the final pages of the two volumes Hegel proclaims the completion of his philosophic inquiry into the beautiful and art, and reaffirms its significance for us:

> For in art we have to do…with the liberation of the spirit from the content and forms of finitude, with the presence and reconciliation of the Absolute in what is apparent and visible, with an unfolding of the truth which is not exhausted in nature history but revealed in world history. *Art itself is the most beautiful side of that history and it is the best compensation for hard work in the world and the bitter labour for knowledge* (*A* II:1236-7, my emphasis).

Despite this final affirmation for the role art has in experience, scholarly takes on Hegel's aesthetics tend to emphasize instead Hegel's vague remarks on art's supposed ending. In fact,

scholarly takes on the so-called ‘end of art’ do not often tarry with romantic art or comedy, where Hegel indeed leaves us at the end of his philosophical inquiry, but turn instead to discussions of classical art, affirming the second movement as the irretrievable golden age of art.

As I will show in section two, claims which affirm the historical ‘end of art’ are unfounded, and conflate Hegel’s nuanced rhetoric on art’s progression and internal ‘limitations’ with the end of artistic creation. Hegel was not naïve to the fact that good, ‘fine’ art would continue to be produced. In section II I will briefly address this misinterpretation and provide a corrective interpretation of how Hegel intended these remarks, drawing on established scholarship to support this claim (Houlgate 1997; Rutter 2010; Maharaj 2013; Bird-Pollen 2020). This misinterpretation can be largely attributed to early scholarly readings of Hegel (Croce 1909; Knox 1936), Heidegger and Adorno’s own writings which deliberately reinforce art’s end drawing resources from Hegel, and of course Arthur Danto’s reading of Hegel. Because it is very well established that this account is indeed erroneous, my intention is to briefly trace the origins and solutions to the ‘end of art’ debate to then focus on the possibility of a Hegelian ‘after of art’ initiated by romantic art.

II: Romantic Art: The Philosophy of Art or *Philosophical Art*?

a. The End of Art Refuted

That Hegel gives indication of some kind of ‘end of art’ is certain. What is meant by the ‘end of art,’ is however, the focus of immense debate. Throughout his series of lectures covering some thousand pages, Hegel references the ‘end of art’ in numerous instances, though his mention in the first pages of Hotho’s edition is most oft quoted:

> In all these respects art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past. Thereby it has lost for us genuine truth and life, and has rather been transferred into our ideas instead of maintaining its earlier necessity in reality and occupying its higher place. What is now aroused in us by works of art is not just immediate enjoyment but our judgment also, since we subject to our intellectual consideration (i) the content of art, and (ii) the work of art's means of presentation, and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of both to one another. The philosophy of art is therefore a greater need in our day than it was in days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is (*A* I:11) [18]

Arthur Danto famously misinterprets this passage as art's eulogy, where art is set to decay.[19] For Danto, this statement especially (but among others within the lectures) is evidence that for Hegel genuine art production is over since it becomes increasingly philosophical. What we get instead of *art* is the *philosophy of art*.[20] According to Danto, art's philosophical leaning leads to art's final (historical) sublation by philosophy, and *sediments* art's redundancy within the Hegelian system. However, despite Danto's insights into the philosophical developments of artmaking, Danto misreads the 'end' in Hegel's philosophy of art as a historical *fait accompli.*[21]

Though art is indeed historical, art does not 'end' in the manner of an autonomous historical sublation where art becomes a definitive thing of the past, making way for, depending on the interpretation, (1) the philosophy of art turning into philosophy *and/or* (2) religion turning into philosophy. Crucially, we must read Hegel's comments on art's 'ending' *phenomenologically*, where art persists as a relevant form of absolute spirit alongside philosophy and religion in our process of self-understanding. This interpretation could alternatively be expressed as one of heteronomous *spiritual* sublation. Art does 'make way' for philosophy, but

art also continues to be created and remains a significant form of experience as a practice of absolute spirit. Art also has an internal development which tends towards a philosophical treatment, but this is does not alter art's implicit value, nor is art replaced by the philosophy of art. By this interpretation, art only 'ends' insofar as art no longer fulfills its "highest vocation" as the fundamental revelatory avenue for grasping the absolute truth about who we are and what our world is. In other words, art is not *the form* of absolute spirit (as Ideal) for grappling with the Idea as it was *within its classical period*.[22] We no longer look solely to art as the privileged medium for self understanding, for concerns of human freedom. Art may still give us insight into this—and it does as I argue—but it is no longer *the only way* we come to this knowledge. Religion and philosophy are also at our disposal and are 'better suited' to 'working out' these fundamental questions due in part to their conceptuality.

Treatments of the 'end of art' in Hegel often also crudely, and without context, emphasize the ostensible need in Hegel's thought to transcend the sensuous altogether, to deny embodiment for a conceptual unity of spirit with itself liberated from the world's 'natural prison.'[23] Hegel, though, is clear that our engagement with the world is not limited to a conceptual analysis of sense-data, but is thoroughly bodily. By claiming that for Hegel the sensuous nature of being human ought to be negated, art as a sensuous form of exploration is therefore claimed to be irrelevant to a self-knowledge that is now wholly philosophical. Arguments such as these are evidently quite undialectical but find support in unqualified readings of passages in the *Aesthetics* such as this: "Art by means of its representations, while remaining within the sensuous sphere, liberates man at the same time from the power of sensuousness" (*A* I:49). Art liberates us, not from sensuousness *altogether*, but from the deceptive pure appearance that is neglectful of the dialectical reality of experience. This correct

interpretation finds support only pages later: "art's vocation is to unveil the *truth* in the form of sensuous artistic configuration, to set forth the reconciled opposition just mentioned, and so to have its ends and aim in itself, in this very setting forth and unveiling" (*A* I:55). Key here for an extension of a Hegelian consideration of art to novel artforms is that art does this *sensuously*, despite the conceptual tendencies of art that arise with its romantic form.

While philosophy and religion are significant forms of experience that enable our 'working out' of who we are, they do not do this sensuously. That alone is the task of art. As Robert Pippin writes, "Any adequate understanding of the Absolute must include an intuitive-sensible-affective mode of understanding. (Without this, any understanding of the Absolute would not be complete)" (Pippin 2014, 44). As an embodied being inhabiting the world, we have *multiple* forms of coming to know the reality of this experience. On the one hand, we have this "intuitive-sensible-affective" mode of grappling with experience. On the other, we have a conceptual mode of apprehension that relies on our ability to think analytically, beyond the way the world appears to us in direct perception. (We also have a manner of combining these modes of apprehension to represent what we experience perceptually in cognition, which religion captures through presentation, or *Vorstellung*.) When considering the 'absolute' or 'divine' nature of experience, the former is the task of art, and the latter of philosophy. However, art evolves within the Hegelian framework, to transcend explicit sensuous unveiling of truth in romantic art by incorporating conceptuality into its artistic constitution. It is this feature of art which has been either ignored or more often miscomprehended in discussions of the 'end of art,' whereby art becoming in some ways 'philosophical' is confused with art's dissolution into philosophy. Contrarily, this internal development remains within art, within its *sensuous expression*, and thereby enables art's continued role as a revelatory form of experience in our

process of self-understanding. It is this internal artistic development which allows for a possible Hegelian 'after of art.'

b. After the End of Art

Hegel expresses the notion of an 'after of art' in his introduction, when discussing the formative role of art in experience and its contemporary significance for us: "But just as art has its 'before' in nature and the finite spheres of life, so too it has an 'after', i.e. a region which in turn transcends art's way of apprehending and representing the Absolute" (*A* I:102). This notion of art's 'after' is generally understood as evidence in support of art's 'end,' as the sublation of art by religion and philosophy, drawing further support from what follows: "For art has still a limit in itself and therefore passes over into higher forms of consciousness. This limitation determines, after all, the position which we are accustomed to assign to art in our contemporary life" (*A* I:102-103). This position is of course art's incapacity for being the sole form of experience which expresses human freedom: "For us art counts no longer as the highest mode in which truth fashions an existence for itself" (*A* I:103). However, this is usually where consideration of the 'after of art' stops (where the 'after of art' is misunderstood as the 'end of art'), and yet a few sentences later Hegel goes on to write that "with the advance of civilization a time generally comes in the case of every people when art points beyond itself" (*A* I:103). If each "civilization" experiences their own unique artistic sublimation, then art is a feature of experience that must be upheld for all progression towards the absolute, and *art itself* evolves to accommodate what Hegel later refers to as art's 'own transcendence,' its 'pointing beyond,' which is the significant feature of romantic art. As Hegel writes "the 'after' of art consists in the fact that there dwells in the spirit the need to satisfy itself solely in its own inner self as the true form for truth to take"

and it is this 'inner self' that is the content of romantic art (*A* I:103). The 'after of art' thus expresses not only the need for philosophy and religion, which it indeed still does, but also the generative power of art itself to exceed its own epistemic sensuous limitations, to evolve as a pertinent form human experience with a dynamic quality as both sensuous *and* conceptual. Art persists in spite of its 'concrete limitations' and through this remains a pertinent form of absolute spirit notwithstanding its inability to do so in an explicitly aesthetic or purely beautiful, sensuous manner as it had in its classical expression.

While it is mostly the case that the 'end of art' thesis has been rectified on the grounds that I have identified, the resonance of its misinterpretation has persistent residues in scholarship. There is continued hesitation even in the most comprehensive examinations of the *Aesthetics* to affirm the possibility of genuine art production after Hegel's own characterization of art.[24] This leads to a timid Hegelian examination of art, keeping mostly within the parameters of the artforms Hegel himself identifies. Attempts at extending Hegel's philosophy of art *do* consider post-Hegelian modern and contemporary art, but mainly modern and contemporary *painting,* as abstract painting in particular, or at a greatest departure from Hegel's own commentary, photography.[25]

There are however a few outliers to this practice. Laura T. Di Summa-Knoop's 2013 paper "Hegel's Symbolic Stage: An Old Perspective on Contemporary Art" argues that Hegel's symbolic stage of art could inform our understanding of contemporary art, where contemporary art forms like Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* act as symbols. However, this account misunderstands how Hegel's philosophy of art develops over the course of the forms in relation to our self-understanding. The symbolic phase cannot account for contemporary art production because we understand ourselves on the terms of romantic art, as caught in the contradictions of our

objective circumstances and our subjective inner lives. Symbolic art does not do this. Di Summa-Knoop's account also does not engage the increase in the conceptuality of art that arises in the romantic phase. William Fowke's 1978 paper "A Hegelian Critique of Found Art and Conceptual Art" uses Hegel's philosophy of art to critique found and conceptual art because neither fully grasps the interpenetrative necessity of both form and content. According to Fowkes, found art overemphasizes the form of art, thereby neglecting a concern of content, and conceptual art conversely overemphasizes the content thereby neglecting art's form. While Fowkes is right to emphasize the necessity of form and content for a Hegelian understanding of art, Fowkes overemphasizes the claims made by artists about their art where either form or content is superseded. Found art does deemphasize art's meaningful content, but does so to emphasize the fact that the form of art could be anything and is no longer restricted to portrayals of pure beauty, which is Hegel's point in his examination of romantic art. Conceptual art does deemphasize art's aesthetic quality, to emphasize the art idea, but indeed, so does Hegel; the concern of romantic art, especially in poetry is the imagination and its spiritual idea. Thus, conceptual art is still fundamentally sensuous, and crucially counts as art in the Hegelian framework, as I will show in more detail in section III.

To be certain, there is a great difficulty in extending Hegel's philosophy of art to account for contemporary art, especially art that denounces its own characterization as such (here I am thinking of Anti-Art, like that of Dadaism), or novel forms that Hegel could not have considered nor likely imagined art would take.[26] Such difficulty of extension lies in part in Hegel's historic method of analysis: projecting Hegel's theory beyond the historic development that he could analyze opens upon a multitude of questions. This fact alongside the significant changes in how we conceive of art and Hegel's relatively conservative views on what constitutes a work of (fine)

art challenges such a contemporary extension of Hegelian philosophy of art. However, putting aside such questions of Hegelian 'fine art,' and the definitional dilemmas that undergird our contemporary understanding of art, Hegel provides us with a fairly open model for how we ought to conceive of the art of the postromantic present. To effectuate this contemporary extension of Hegel's theoretical work, we must bracket how certain relevant authorities lay claim to their art—artists, art historians, art critics—and examine art on purely Hegelian terrain, as either adequate or inadequate configurations of sensible material capable of expressing something significant about humanity's spiritual history. On these grounds, there is no a priori reason for denouncing the existence of post-Hegelian art, especially after the classical period, as is often claimed in 'end of art' debates. Rather, there is increasing evidence in art's material advancements not only for the empirical fact that art *exists* after Hegel, but that Hegel's theoretical philosophy of art continues to elucidate how such art functions in our experience.

In his final remarks on romantic art and romantic art's eventual 'dissolution,' Hegel makes many invocations of art's open and free capacity after its romantic stage. The unbarred artistic freedom arises because the content of art is now fully the infinite subjective life of the human being. The content of art is still the 'divine,' but the human being "bows the knee no longer" because art "makes *Humanus* its new holy of holies" (*A,* I:103, I:607). Herewith the content of art loses its fixity to a "specific range of content and treatment…nothing that can be living in the human breast is alien to that spirit anymore…for art does need any longer to represent only what is absolutely at home at one of its specific stages, but everything in which man as such is capable of being at home" (*A* I:607). The content and form of art are blown wide open, able to be anything so long as it expresses *something* true to the human condition that transcends the prosaic 'pure appearance.' Romantic art leaves artists with "absolute material

(*Stoff*)," the infinite capacity of the post-romantic which has "every form and every material…now at the service and command of the artist whose talent is explicitly freed from the earlier limitation to one specific art-form" (*A* I:606-607).[27]

Thus, I do not see it as explicitly necessary to remain within the bounds of the artforms Hegel himself considers. In the first volume of the *Aesthetics* Hegel invokes empirical examples, but his central aim is to provide a scientific, that is, rigorous, examination of the universal role of art in experience through three particular forms of art. It is not until the second volume that Hegel analyzes individual empirical artforms, namely architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry as those which epitomize the development of art across its three broader forms. In this second volume Hegel precedes his empirical analysis with a caveat of his own limitations to covering the vast array of empirical forms art may take: "in order to discuss the details of a branch of art a man must have seen a great deal" and while Hegel has "seen a considerable amount, [he has not seen] all that would be necessary for treating this subject in full detail" (*A* II:629).

I believe that Hegel presents us with ways of considering the universal character of art and considers some empirical forms that function best for the different stages of art as Hegel sees them. Yet Hegel also leaves us with the door wide open, to consider art of "every form and every material" (*A* I:606). I therefore do not think it is possible to posit a form of art that 'undoes' Hegel's theoretical work. What I think is more helpful is to see how Hegel's thinking on art can be used to consider novel forms of creation, to see if what Hegel writes about art still expresses something relevant for our current practices of artmaking. Indeed, as I will show in the next section, Hegel's philosophy has only become more valuable the more art departs from its

traditional aesthetic parameters. As art becomes increasingly self-conscious, conceptual, and embodied, Hegel's philosophy of art is a fundamental guide for navigating art's novel terrain.

III: The Duality of the Post-Romantic Present: Art's Increasing Conceptuality and Anthropomorphism

a. Art's Evolution

I want to return in this section to the themes of conceptuality and anthropomorphism that achieve their height in poetry, to argue that these concerns have become increasingly central to contemporary art practices, thereby demonstrating art's continued Hegelian relevance. Art's increasing concern with conceptuality has been misconstrued as evidence for the 'end of art' claim where art is subsumed by philosophy. Art's increasing anthropomorphism has been largely ignored by those advancing 'end of art' claims. These claims also center the classical period, neglecting Hegel's astute remarks on romantic art where art transcends the aesthetic ideals of its classical phase, to become more 'ensouled' and 'spiritualized.' This is achieved in romantic art by emphasizing the individual subject, augmenting the classical notion of beauty (as the Ideal parity of form with content) with the subjective inner life, obtaining a higher "spiritual beauty" that is not as concerned with traditional aesthetic ideals. Art does not thereby end but becomes more universal (i.e., conceptual) and finds this universality in the living individual (i.e., anthropomorphic).

The aim of art is to turn "every one of its productions into a thousand-eyed Argus" where "the inner soul and spirit is seen at every point" and to do so art must transcend external ideality and the parameters of traditional beauty (*A* I:154). Sculptures, and indeed the classical forms in general, are static, rigid, and unanimated. Here the human being is reduced to a mere

part of its individuality, into a solely corporeal expression of individuality, lacking the animation of the soul which makes it human: "the soul is the substantial unity and all-pervasive universality which at the same time is simple relation to itself and subjective self-awareness" (*A* I:119). There is no subjective inner life in the displays of cold statuary, which are bound to their fixed position, too much like "the inanimate bodies of inorganic nature [which] have their fixed position in space; they are one with their place, bound to it, or moved from it only by an external force" (*A* I:122). Though they are of human form, and thus achieve the definite shape of the human being, they lack the dynamism of ensoulment and are restricted in their one-sidedness. Art moves onto its romantic phase, *to obtain eyes* and to become *living*: the "inherently free independence of subjective life shows itself principally in *spontaneous* movement" (*A* I:122).

It is this feature of art's liveliness that has been the focus of scholarship which attempts to extend Hegel's philosophy of art for modern art but uses this as evidence either for a Hegelian conception of aesthetic experience, for modern painting, or as demonstrative of Hegel's conception of life, for modern literature.[28] My aim in what follows is to demonstrate how this liveliness, when understood as a function of anthropomorphism and as expressive of the dynamism of ensouled corporeality, provides evidence for an extension of Hegel's aesthetic work into and beyond modernism. It is with the romantic arts that liveliness is introduced into the arts for Hegel, enhancing the capacity that art has to express the fullness of individuality (*A* II:1006). Poetry as the best expression of romantic art and thus the artform most reflective of individuality, animates the concrete state of the world, bringing things "out of the abstraction of the ordinary way of putting things and into a concrete liveliness" (*A* II:1006). Indeed, with the truly successful poetic works:

> [N]ot only is it liberated from that separation between thinking, which is concentrated on the individual, but it also at the same time frees these latter forms of consciousness and their content and objects from their servitude to thinking and conducts them victoriously to reconciliation with the universality of thought (*A* II:1006).

Liveliness enhances the ideality of the anthropomorphic form captured in classical art, taking the anthropomorphism to completion as expressing the fullness of individual subjectivity: "the human being, as actual subjectivity must be made the principle, and thereby alone, as we already saw earlier…, does the anthropomorphic reach its consummation" (*A* I:518-519).

However, to arrive at the postmodern and demonstrate the connection between it and liveliness, one must begin with the novelty that modernism introduces. Though Hegel did not experience the substantial changes that art underwent with the arrival of modernism (in the current art-historical sense of that term), Hegel was writing on its precipice; indeed, Pippin argues that Hegel is modernism's aesthetic (and philosophical) precursor and paragon (Pippin 2014, 44). This can be understood by noting that modernist art revolutionizes art by including a self-consciousness of its artistic thingness into the constitution of its formal character. It achieves this project by acknowledging, in different ways, the fact that it is art in its artistic portrayals. In so doing, this art thereby rejects realism which attempts to conceal the artistic thingness of the work. Take for example the perspective of a Manet painting. Manet paints his figures so that they appear to be looking out of the painting at the perceiver instead of being absorbed in an activity immanent to the artwork. In doing so, Manet acknowledges the perceiver and simultaneously acknowledges its reality as a work of art. This modernist move reflects the Hegelian turn in romantic art, where art becomes increasingly subjective and defiant of the traditional aesthetic

principles of beauty and form. But art has crucially evolved beyond modernism to become increasingly conceptual, anthropomorphic, and self-conscious. It has done this by evacuating the traditional principles of the modernist medium, to afford art "every form and every material" which aligns with the developments of dramatic poetry.

Indeed, it is in the modernist period (though as the fundamental precursor to postmodern art) that art wins its freedom from the bounds of traditional medium, with Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp effects a substantial change in how we conceive of art (including the role of the artist) that greatly exceeds the modernist project. Duchamp rejects all principles of what modern art critic Clement Greenberg calls 'medium specificity,' as the idea that each medium upholds certain formal principles. By example, according to Greenberg, all painting must be, in effect 'flat' (Greenberg, 1993). Though Greenberg highlights the self-reflective tendencies of the modernist project, he limits the manner of presentation available for the artist to illustrate this reflexivity. Duchamp and his project of readymades annihilates the rigid parameters outlined for artistic creation, evacuating art from within medium specific boundaries. What arises in the wake of Duchamp is a multitude of artistic variety, from multimedia effectuations to more conceptual 'idea' centric art projects. Also woven into the complex art historic evolution from modern to postmodern and contemporary art is a dynamic change in our understanding of performance. Performance art evolves from its nascent state and traditional parameters of theatre, music, and dance to effectively evacuate the proscenium arch for a greater embeddedness in everyday experience. Performance art becomes increasingly self-conscious but in and through dynamic embodiment. What we get then for contemporary art creation is an unparalleled artistic freedom—it appears that almost anything can be art (as infinite materiality is at free disposal),

and almost anyone can be an artist (as technical skill has been abandoned for the universal character of self-conscious reflection).

Though there are various avenues for demonstrating the open capacity of art after Duchamp, and how Hegel can indeed account for such art, the work of artist Lygia Clark is particularly well suited to advancing these claims. As I will show in the next section, Clark's artwork blurs the boundaries between art's increasing concern with conceptuality and performance by centralizing both the artistic idea—as what is central to the work beyond its aesthetic concerns—and the embodied intersubjective individual. In this way, Clark's artwork aptly expresses the turn in Hegelian art made by dramatic poetry which universalizes art through its conceptuality and anthropomorphism. In the remainder of this paper, I will examine Clark's artwork and aesthetic philosophy to demonstrate how contemporary artforms, such as Clark's participatory form, can be accounted for within the Hegelian system, and how Hegel's thinking on art is especially relevant for such novel artforms.

b. Lygia Clark's Participatory Art

Though often considered a Brazilian Neo-Concrete artist working at the tail cusp of modernism, Clark cannot be bound within a determinate metric of classification. Clark is neither wholly Neo-Concrete, nor Modernist, as her work exceeds the parameters of determinate genre classification. By my understanding, Clark is better understood as a participatory artist in her own right, and indeed a rather postmodern artist than a modern one (Clark defiantly rejects any form of 'medium-specificity,' to be sure). The aim of Clark's 'artwork' is to challenge modes of artistic creation which render art rigid and distinct from everyday experience, and she does this by emphasizing the experience the 'art object' enables for the 'perceivers' beyond the 'art object'

itself. Clark even changes the linguistic signification of how her art is considered, deeming her creations propositions (*proposição*), as active and present events of creation, instead of 'artworks' which for her represent static art objects. More than this, Clark does not view those who engage with her work as perceivers, but crucially as participants involved in the co-creation of the piece. If there is to be an artistic experience on Clark's terms, then all who engage must do so as active participants in the creation of the art—as it exists only if engaged with and the works themselves acknowledge and emphasize this. Participants are thus unable to be passive perceivers merely 'watching' the art piece unfold.

However, Clark did not begin with this aesthetic philosophy of experiential creation involving proposition and participant. In the early 1950s Clark begins her career as an abstract painter. Clark is immediately skeptical of the limits of painting as a medium which she demonstrates by integrating what she calls an 'organic line' into the plane of her painting (see *Descoberta da linha orgânica* (Discovery of the organic line) 1954 in figure 1). This organic line is a natural space, a breakage of the formal canvas which relies on the background (a wall or larger contrasting surface area) to uphold a 'line' of empty space between the fragmented canvas's (or canvas and frame) positioned together as a whole, thus incorporating the space, as an 'organic line' into the singularity of the work. By introducing this novel 'organic line,' Clark reconfigures the traditional parameters of painting, where a painting is comprised of paint on a background, and she does this cleverly within the medium of painting itself. Despite this novelty, Clark grew wary of the picture plane and shortly following this phase of her work, Clark famously declares the "death of the plane," ending her painterly phase.

For Clark, the two-dimensional nature of painting lacks a capacity for holistic participatory engagement, which ought to call forth not just one's ocular sensibilities, but the

whole of one's capacity for perception. Indeed, the idea of the dominance of the picture plane could be said to enforce the Hegelian notion of the deception of the 'pure appearance' of reality because it appears to account for the whole of the art when in truth it is only an element of the whole. Beyond what appears before us in direct perception as the artwork, an artwork is also the background of space, artists, and circumstances which contribute to its creation: "The plane arbitrarily marks off the limits of a space, giving humanity an entirely false and rational idea of its own reality. From this are derived the opposing concepts of high and low, front and back—exactly what contributes to the destruction in humankind of the feeling of wholeness" (Clark 2017, 96). The picture plane is set out apart from the perceiver and is apotheosized as a totalizing whole which disregards the other elements crucial to its ostensible singularity, the dialectical reality which reinforces its existence as a work of art. Thus, for Clark, "the plane is dead" and "the philosophical conception that humanity projected onto it no longer satisfies—*no more than does the idea of an external God persist*" (Clark 2017, 96, my emphasis). Clark goes on, in a way that eerily recalls the Hegelian move from classical to romantic art, to argue that the death of the plane mimics the secularizing move made in history, to turn inward instead of looking elsewhere for an idea of God.[29] Just as for Hegel "we bow the knee no longer" before the artistic portrayals of the external deities, the plane as an external deity is no longer satisfactory. And like Hegel, Clark posits a kind of *poetry* as the artform that which rises from the plane's ashes, "burst[ing] the pictorial rectangle asunder": "In becoming aware that it is a matter of an *internal poetry of the self that is projected into the exterior*, it is understood at the same time that this poetry must be reintegrated—as an indivisible part of the individual" (Clark, 2017, 96, my emphasis). By moving beyond the parameters of the 'false whole' of the picture plane into an externalization of

the interior poetry of life, Clark reinforces the inextricability of art and life, as the dialectical reality which enables the sensuous entities of art to exist.

Spawning from the "death of the plane" is Clark's renowned *Bichos* (Critters), a series of manipulable hinged structures which, when handled, either acquiesce and bend or resist and remain rigid in response to the movements of the participating perceiver. Having no determinate front, back, or side faces, the *Bichos* reject the traditional passivity of sculptural form and evade traditional parameters of display in a gallery or museum because their purpose is to be played with, enabling a dialectical action and reaction between subject and object. Clark's series of *Bichos* encapsulates the nature and trajectory of all her later work: the experience that the object enables for the perceiver is the significant aspect of the 'artwork,' beyond its formal aesthetic configuration, and the object acts as a kind of 'transitional object' in the experience it brings forth for the participant.[30] This synopsis of Clark's artistic aim only intensifies in significance throughout Clark's artistic development, as her creations become less about the formal nature of the object (e.g. a metal structured hinged such and such a way) and more about the way the object functions in relation to the experiencing subject (e.g. a common item which enables a specific kind of subject response).

Clark's middle period of what she calls 'Relational Objects' encompasses a series of experiences between selves and others that are facilitated by common everyday objects of experience, such as a vacuum hose, a plastic bag, a rock. These objects are elevated to 'transitional objects' which facilitate an aesthetic experience for individuals, couples, or groups, depending on the proposition. Clark's proposition *Diálogo de mãos* (Dialogue of hands, 1966) consists of an elastic band in the shape of a Mobius strip which two people fit their hands into, connecting them in a sensuous dialogue of gestures. The movements of one person causes the

responsive movement of the other. All of this is facilitated by a rather banal elastic band, which while significant insofar as it enables the dialectical aesthetic experience, is insignificant because "the only thing that matters," according to Clark, "is the act-in-progress" (Marcel 2007, 254).

Clark's philosophy of art and her art practice exemplify the Hegelian notion that art exceeds aesthetic parameters to be a revelatory aspect of experience for those who create it. For Clark, much like Hegel, art is an element of experience that allows an understanding of oneself to be determined, and this happens as a sensuous unfolding alongside others within a world of experience. Art can indeed achieve this through traditional means, where the eyes and the body move around a static object in adumbration to glean the artwork's significance. But in this way, the artwork is set apart from the person: there is a literal distance, a space between the art and the perceiver, between art and experience which can allow for the significance of the work—that it expresses something meaningful *about experience*—to be missed. To bridge the gap, Clark integrates art *into* life, reclaiming the space between the 'artwork' and the 'perceiver,' transforming the artwork into the immanency of the act of creation, as an aesthetic experience for the participants that is guided along by Clark's artistic proposition. Through Clark's method, there is no capacity to 'miss the mark' and ignore the significance the artwork may have for you. Your experience *is* the artwork, and it demands your holistic participation, as an embodied subject capable of self-conscious reflection. Just as in Hegelian poetry, "the living man himself is the material medium of expression" (*A* II:1039).

In this way, Clark exemplifies the terminus of art's trajectory within the *Aesthetics*: art is increasingly self-conscious, about the individual, and transcends a specific and fixed spatiotemporal 'medium' to make everyday experience the universal site of exposure. The adumbrated ascertaining of significance from more traditional works appeals to the Hegelian

classical form, where the perceiver is set at a distance from the artwork. As Clark declared the death of the plane to transcend traditional forms, Hegel also saw the need to transcend rigid artistic formulations, to make way for the dynamism of romantic art which emphasizes interpretation and the spontaneous movement as animated by the soul. Though Hegel and Clark differ in that Hegel upholds painting as a form of romantic art, Clark aligns with the Hegelian move to transcend painting with poetry, making way for a more universal artform that emphasizes conceptuality and the liveliness of heightened anthropomorphism.

More specifically, Clark's artform reflects the character of Hegelian comedy. Clark's artwork does so by appealing to the objective humour in the banality of everyday circumstances and objects in her art. Mimicking how Hegel understands poetry, Clark's propositions provide an outline for the shape the aesthetic experience should take, but it is the *imagination* of the participant which enlivens Clark's artistic proposition. While it may be argued that Clark's artwork lacks a key feature of poetry, its linguistic formulation, Hegel also claims that *gestures,* the *spontaneous movement* of the body, function as a kind of language: "If gestures are carried artistically to such a degree of expression that words can be dispensed with, then we have pantomime which, in that case, turns the rhythmic movement of poetry into a rhythmic and pictorial movement of limbs" (*A* II:1039). Hegel is not here advocating for a rigid technical movement which has befallen, in his time, ballet and the art of dance, but rather a "measured movement in harmony with our emotions, and a freedom and grace" that at his time he claims are "extremely rare" (*A* II:1192). Though Hegel never outlines a robust examination of this kind of art and how it would function within his work, these comments lend credibility to the idea that the body in aesthetic experience, moving spontaneously in connection with our emotions, as in pantomime, would induct embodied artistic expressions "into the free realm of art" (*A* II:1992).

And if there were to be an artist whose work encapsulates this trajectory sketched by Hegel's commentary on pantomime, it is the propositional work of Lygia Clark. Clark's artwork epitomizes the sentiment of pantomime as that artistic language of the body in free movement. Clark writes that it is "time to build a space for language with [the] body" and Clark realizes this aspiration through her intersubjective, gestural propositions, like that of *Diálogo de mãos*.

As in Hegelian comedy, in Clark's 'artwork' neither subject nor substance is destroyed in the aesthetic unfolding, but preserved and upheld. Through the objective humour which marks Clark's artwork—the bizarre nature of taking everyday objects and covering oneself with them, engaging in uncharacteristic actions with others though them—the precariousness of the reality of being human as a dialectical unfolding between selves and others, mediated by the space and time of existence is revealed without any destruction of people or overarching principle. For Clark, this was the task of all her art, to enable through her propositions the "sensation of precariousness, of being absorbed in the immanence of the act of discovering the sense of existing" (Lepecki 2007, 279). This discovery is aided along by the humour of putting oneself in bizarre circumstances, transforming banal everyday objects into objects which enable an aesthetic experience, allowing the circumstances to become spiritualized such that their significance is brought forth, revealing the "sensuous shining" of spirit.

To be sure, it is not only the work of Clark that extends Hegel's aesthetic philosophy into our contemporary situation. The work of Hélio Oiticica, Adrian Piper, and Allan Kaprow, to name a few artists working with participatory engagement in like fashion to Clark, all provide viable paths of exploring Hegel's relevance to contemporary artforms.[31] Alternatively, the intraparticipatory nature of theatre is rich with possibilities for this kind of contemporary Hegelian exploration. The work of Clark is thus one of multiple avenues for demonstrating

Hegel's continued relevance to contemporary forms of creation but is exemplary in so doing because her work captures both the growing conceptuality of artmaking as well as its tendency toward lively anthropomorphism. More than this, Clark exemplifies the further turn inward towards a self-conscious reflection in and through the art that was instantiated by the modernist period. Yet through Clark, all these concerns appear to be unified: her art is conceptual through its dismissiveness of traditional aesthetic beauty; anthropomorphic, as the living human being is the site of aesthetic exposure; and self-conscious, insofar as the purpose of Clark's art is to reveal something about who you are, as an embodied subject capable of self-conscious reflection. Thus, Clark's participatory form sheds light on the way Hegel's theoretical work may be extended for a possible variety of novel forms by working at the intersection of such an expansive variety, as a conglomerate of conceptual art and performance art. But Clark is not exceptional in that she is alone in this artistic pursuit. Clark is only an exceptional figure in that she brings the thematic concerns of postmodern art to exceptional heights.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that Hegel's aesthetic philosophy is a fruitful resource for examining contemporary artforms despite the persistence of the Hegelian 'end of art' claims obscuring such an analysis. I provided an overview of the 'end of art' thesis, offering a corrective interpretation drawing from the wealth of scholarship abound on this topic. Following this, I turned towards the Hegelian 'after of art,' extending Hegelian aesthetic philosophy to recent creation, emphasizing romantic art and postromantic art as the area wherefrom an extension of Hegel's philosophy ought to draw. By tracing the developments in Hegel's analysis of empirical forms, as increasingly conceptual and anthropomorphic, I argued that Hegel's work not only offers a

possible avenue for contemporary analysis, but is an indispensable resource considering the paralleling thematic concerns evolving in contemporary material art practice. Finally, through the example of Lygia Clark's participatory work, I demonstrated the possibility of such a contemporary Hegelian extension, highlighting the uncanny ways contemporary art practice has evolved to not only reflect Hegel's theoretical philosophy, but to excel in such an execution.

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Figures

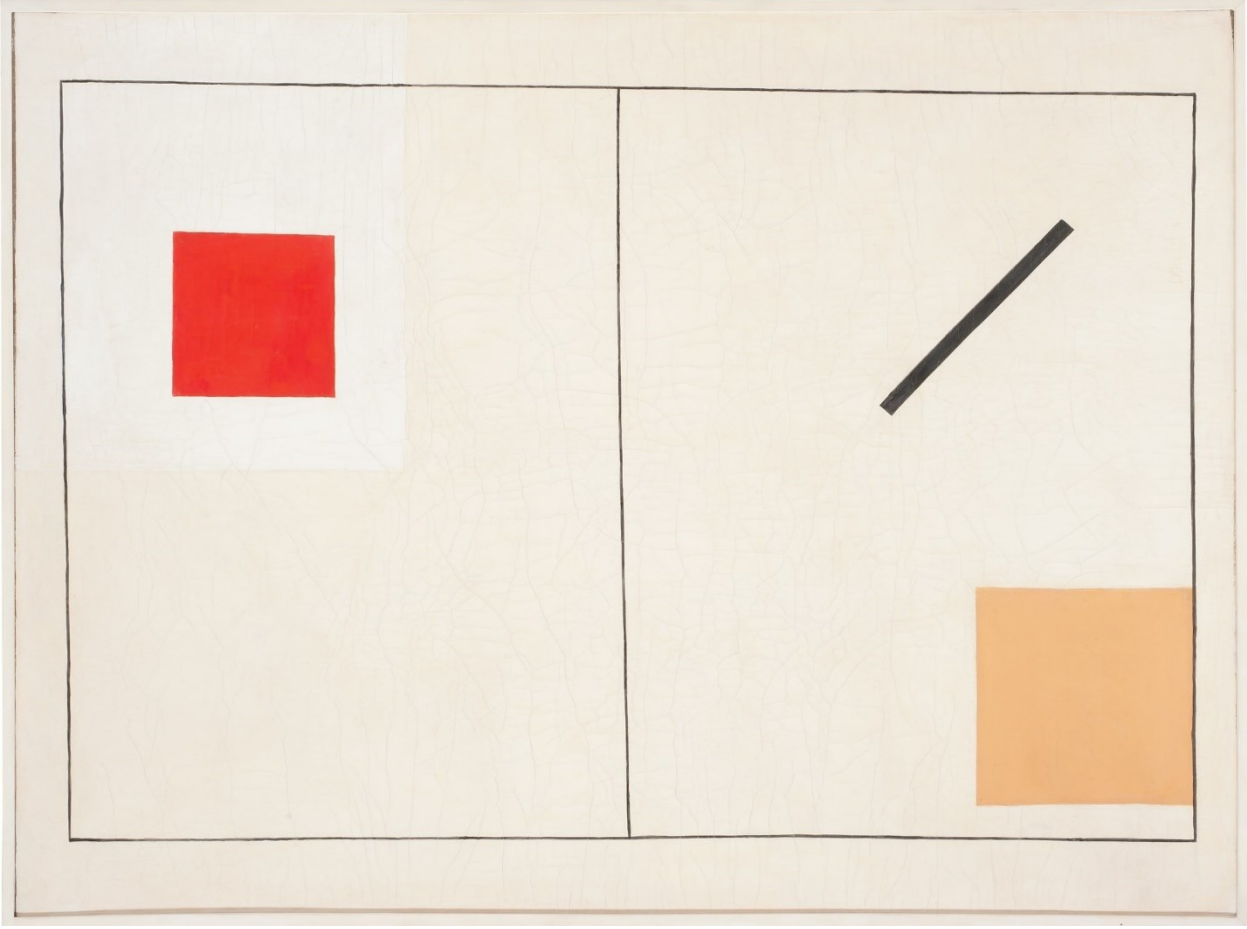

Fig. 1. Clark, Lygia. *Descoberta da linha orgânica* (Discovery of the organic line). Oil on canvas (59.5 x 80 cm), 1954, MoMA, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/181/2402

End Notes

[1] Hegel does not discuss aesthetic experience as a distinct phenomenon, but considers aesthetic experience as inextricably bound to an artistic meaning. These two aspects of art are not mutually exclusive nor able to be meaningfully distinguished one from the other. For a detailed

examination of the inseparability of artistic production and aesthetic experience in Hegel's philosophy of art, see Pippin's "Absence of Aesthetics in Hegel's *Aesthetics*" in the *Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (2008).

[2] Hereafter my references to Hegel 1975 will be given in the style of *A* I: 1.

[3] Speaking to this point, Hegel writes: "In a work of art we begin with what is immediately presented to us and only then ask what its meaning or content is. The former, the external appearance, has no immediate value for us; we assume behind it something inward, a meaning whereby the external appearance is endowed with spirit. It is to this, its soul, that the external points. For an appearance that means something does not present itself to our minds, or what it is as external, but something else" (*A* 1:19). Again, at the close of the first volume Hegel writes: "For it is the content which, as in all human work, so also in art is decisive" (*A* 1:611).

[4] This is a function of what Hegel calls spirit's 'doubling' wherein the human being has the capacity for the kind of creation that expresses and reflects who we are, because of our being more than just an object, but a subject (with all that is implied in the use of such a term) too: "Things in nature are only *immediate* and *single*, while man as spirit duplicates himself, in that (i) he *is* as things in nature are, but (ii) he is just as much *for* himself; he sees himself, represents himself to himself, thinks, and only on the strength of this active placing himself before himself is he spirit" (*A* 1:31).

[5] Here I am using a different translation to Knox's in the *Aesthetics* for *Vorstellung*, which is 'pictorial thinking'.

[6] Within Hegel's own terminology, art is the sensible shining of the Idea (art's content). The Idea is the Concept made real, where the Concept is a discursively grasped—both structurally and conditionally—reconciliation of the dualities which make up experience. The Idea given perfect

representation in sensibility is the Ideal, which is epitomized by classical art. The Ideal is what Hegel would call beautiful.

[7] For an examination of the Ideal and the capacity for art to be expressive thereof and thus beautiful, see Chapter III in vol. 1 of the *Aesthetics*.

[8] Speaking to this point, Hegel writes: "It follows that the artist now [in the classical stage] acquires a position different from previous ones. His production, that is to say, is the free deed of the clear-headed man who equally knows what he wills and can accomplish what he wills, and who, in other words, neither is unclear about the meaning and the substantial content which he intends to shape outwardly for contemplation, nor in the execution of his work does he find himself hindered by any technical incapacity" (*A* I:438). Included in this is that the artist has an adequate grasp of her freedom and the capacity to give this freedom due expression in externality.

[9] Hegel writes of classical sculpture that "Sculpture in general comprises the miracle of spirit's giving itself and image of itself in something purely material. Spirit so forms this external thing that it is present to itself in it and recognizes in it the appropriate shape of its own inner life" (*A* II:710).

[10] I read Hegel's term divine to mean those aspects of life that are most significant for us in our self understanding, and thus read divine along the same lines as Absolute.

[11] To grasp the fullness of this point see Hegel's remarks on nature in Part I, Chapter II and Hegel's remarks on symbolic art, on the symbol in general, in Part II, Section I, introduction. For how Hegel develops this point of incapacity with respect to different historical cultures, see chapters I and II in Part II, Section I. For a response to Hegel's inadequacy in such a characterization, see Davis 2018 in *The Art of Hegel's Aesthetics*.

[12] There is of course debate on whether Hegel's views on art are adequate to the art he is analyzing. For a recent examination which challenges Hegel's views on what he characterizes as 'pre-art' see Davis 2018 in *The Art of Hegel's Aesthetics*.

[13] See *Aesthetics* vol.2 Section III Chapters I-III for a treatment of these empirical forms as exemplars of the romantic art form.

[14] For an examination which contests this idea and argues for Hegel's relevance for understanding and accounting for contemporary sculpture, like those of Louise Bourgeois, see Torsen 2018 in *The Art of Hegel's Aesthetics.*

[15] There are of course scholars who would disagree with such an assessment. Pippin 2014 argues that because Hegel's aesthetic philosophy is thoroughly one pertaining to the visual arts, that painting is indeed the height of romantic art for Hegel. This is not my interpretation on the grounds that Hegel leaves us with poetry, as a more conceptual and thus rich artform as I develop in this paper.

[16] The feature of liveliness present in the *Aesthetics* is highlighted by Pippin (2008) to draw attention to the capacity of art to enliven us in terms of aesthetic experience, and by Rutter (2010) for art's increasing animation and absorption. Rutters characterizes liveliness as a kind of subjective absorption expressed in the artwork that exceeds the parameters of classical beauty but affirms the spiritual beauty present in romantic art wherein the subject of the artwork is seen to be 'at home' through their absorption in the act depicted, as in the field workers of Dutch genre painting (Rutter 92-100). I owe credit to Rutter in particular for highlighting the feature of liveliness as dynamic ensouled corporeality in his discussions of painting and literature in *Hegel on the Modern Arts* but my use and interpretation of liveliness differs in that I see art tending towards liveness as connected to the development of arts anthropomorphism, indeed as a kind of

animation or living anthropomorphism which enables an extension of Hegel's art into and beyond modernity, despite Hegel's reservations and pessimism regarding this possibility.

[17] In contrast to this Hegel writes that "Consequently in the case of poetry proper it is a matter of indifference whether we read it or hear it read; it can even be translated into other languages without essential detriment to its value, and turned from poetry into prose, and in these cases it is related to quite different sounds from those of the original" (*A* 2: 964). I understand this point as emphasizing the universal status of poetry itself, 'poetry proper'. However, it is only when is enacted and thereby becomes dramatic poetry that poetry fully reaches its height.

[18] Additional claims like this are "art no longer counts as the highest mode in which truth fashions an exists for itself" and art "remains for use a thing of the past" (*A* 1:102-103). I read all these claims as expressing the same point.

[19] Though Danto is famous for such an assertion, he is not the first to make it. Benedotto Croce and Israel Knox also emphasize the death of art. I draw from Maharaj's astute observations in *The Dialectics of Aesthetic Agency* to highlight two quotes from Croce and Knox respectively: "The Aesthetic of Hegel is thus a funeral oration: he passes in review the successive forms of art, shows the progressive steps of internal consumption and lays the whole in its grave, leaving Philosophy to write its epitaph" (1909, 302-303) and "Hegel is chanting: *le roi est mort; vive le roi*—that art is dead; long live philosophy. And Hegel does not seem to be shedding any tears of lamentation. He is speaking of the death of art in no metaphorical sense but in a definite historical and cultural sense" (1936, 101).

[20] The theme of art ending is Danto's *enfant terrible* and can be found throughout his works. This connection between Hegel and Danto's own work is made explicit especially in *The End of Art: A Philosophical Defense*, 1998.

[21] See Hulatt 2016 for an examination of Danto's use of Hegel's work to inform his own, now well know, interpretation on the 'end of art' and how this develops across Danto's career, gaining, according to Hulatt, a significant revision.

[22] It should be noted that the capacity for art to fulfill its highest vocation was due in part to an inadequacy of spiritual self-understanding. It is for this reason that Hegel's development of art does not finish here, but moves onto romantic art to obtain a spiritual development, becoming more subjective, and thus more indicative of the free human subject.

[23] Llewellyn, 2005.

[24] Here I am thinking especially of Rutter 2010 and Pippin 2014.

[25] See Pippin 2014 for modern painting. See Russon 2015 and 2020 for modern and abstract painting. See Hoff 2020 for photography.

[26] However, artists do not get to lay claim to the significance of their art apart from theoretical systems such as Hegel's which analyses art in relation to spirit. If there is an argument made by artists that their art is 'anti-art' there remains within this the idea that it still functions within the parameters of art, rather playing into a sort of debate with traditional definitional schema that attempts to limit art to specific characteristics.

[27] Further evidence for art's open capacity is found at *A* 1:593-593.

[28] See Pippin 2014 for painting and Rutter 2010 for painting and literature.

[29] Though it is unclear to me if Lygia Clark was familiar with the work of Hegel, Clark was intimately acquainted with phenomenology, especially the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The influences of phenomenology are evident in her work and were a major guiding force for the creation of the Neo-Concrete movement which Clark co-initiated.

[30] Clark appropriates this term from D. W. Winnicott who first introduces the idea of a 'transitional object' as a material conduit in early childhood development which enables the child to move beyond their attachment to the mother or primary caretaker towards genuine object-relationships (Winnicott 1951). This connection is best exhibited in Clark's series of *Relational Objects*. It could be argued that for Clark, the art object was always a 'transitional object' connecting art to life, enabling an understanding of oneself distinct from our everyday associations with objects and others in the world. Clark was heavily influenced by psychoanalysis, especially the work of Winnicott and Melanie Klein as is evidenced especially by her final period of artwork consisting of an object based psychoanalytic therapy. In addition, Clark was interested in the work of R. D. Laing, Deleuze and Guttari (Anti-Oedipus in particular) and the work of Guttari carried out at La Borde. For the connections between Clark's art and her relationship to psychoanalysis and use of the term 'transitional object' see Macel 2014 in *Lygia Clark*; for the connections between Clark and alternatives to psychoanalysis see Larsen, Rolnik 2007.

[31] I am considering mainly the participatory element present in the work of these artists. Specifically, I am thinking of Oiticica's concept of the 'lived environment,' Piper's 1882-1884 *Funk Lessons*, and Kaprow's 1960s introduction of Happenings.