

# INTRODUCTION

by Francesco Campana and Luca Illetterati

Hegel's Philosophy of Art has always attracted readers' attention and generated countless debates. Since he gave his lectures in Berlin, his reflections on art garnered considerable interest amongst scholars of his work; the discussions about this part of the system would continue in the following decades as well, and its influence can be found in many theoretical perspectives on art during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Marxism, Critical theory, Structuralism, etc.). In the second half of this Century, and especially in the last few years, the interest in Hegel's Philosophy of Art has acquired new impulse.

There are two main reasons for this renewed interest. The first is the intense work on the various *Mitschriften* and *Nachschriften* of the students who attended the Hegelian classes on Philosophy of Art in Berlin. This theoretical-philological effort, mainly led by the group of the *Hegel-Archiv* in Bochum, has opened the possibility of questioning the edition of Heinrich Gustav Hotho and inaugurated new perspectives in the research<sup>1</sup>. Aside from works dedicated to the textual aspects, numerous notions and topics enter (or return to) the limelight: topics such as the role played by the symbolic art, the notion of ugliness, the Hegelian position on music, and the meaning of the color in painting have all found their way into the limelight.

A second factor that reinvigorated interest in Hegelian thought about art comes from the considerations by philosophers and scholars, who belong to traditions that are not, *prima facie*, 'Hegelian'. Authors like Hans Belting or Arthur C. Danto

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. GETHMANN-SIEFERT, *Ästhetik oder Philosophie der Kunst. Die Nachschriften und Zeugnisse zu Hegels Berliner Vorlesungen*, «Hegel-Studien», XXVI, 1991, pp. 92-110; G. PINNA, *Estetica o filosofia dell'arte. Revisioni testuali e interpretazione dell'estetica di Hegel*, «Giornale critico della filosofia italiana», LXXXI, 83, (2001) 2002, pp. 503-511. For the first volume of the edition of the scholar's manuscripts in the *Gesammelte Werke*, cf. N. HEBING, *Hegels Ästhetik historisch-kritisch. Eine neue Quelle eröffnet neue Perspektiven*, «Hegel-Studien», II, 2015, pp. 123-155.

have found in Hegel a precious sparring partner with whom they can ideally discuss some art-historical problems. Indeed, they have found in his philosophy an appealing perspective, through which they can give an interpretation of artistic development after the time of Hegel. In particular, for these authors, the reformulation of the so-called thesis of the ‘end of art’ played a crucial role understanding the revolutionary events in the History of Art of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The «rumor» of this thesis and of the Hegelian art-philosophical insights in general are core topics of the present volume<sup>2</sup>.

In February 2015, we opened a call for papers, specifying the two main topics of the issue. The first one consisted of a discussion of the contemporary relevance of Hegel’s Aesthetics. This topic was regarded as either a problem in itself, or as the examination of one of the authors who has tried to re-read our era with Hegel’s Philosophy of Art (such as Dieter Henrich, Robert B. Pippin, Annemarie Gethmann-Sieft, or the aforementioned Arthur C. Danto and Hans Belting).

The second topic was the consideration of the individual arts (architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry). Beyond the admittedly overworked problem that is the ‘end of art’ thesis, one of the most fascinating aspects of Hegel’s Philosophy of Art is the attention to the concreteness of art in all its different aspects. The topic aimed to foster discussion on these individual arts in Hegel’s Aesthetics, either from a local point of view (one individual art, a specific genre or a particular aspect within an individual art) or from a systematic point of view (the system of the individual arts, as well as the relationship between the individual arts and the forms of art or the realms of the spirit).

The present issue collects articles written by invited authors – Niklas Hebing, Lydia Moland, Alain Patrick Olivier, and Gabriele Tomasi, in addition to an article of one of the editors, Francesco Campana – and contributions chosen through the

<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. GEULEN, *Das Ende der Kunst. Lesarten eines Gerüchts nach Hegel*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 2002; Eng. trans. by J. McFarland, *The End of Art. Readings in a Rumor after Hegel*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2006.

call for papers – Alessandro Bertinetto, Gerad Gentry, Andrea Piras, Francesco Valagussa.

Research on Hegel's Philosophy of Art is characterized by a plurality of voices that represent different points of view: this means that there is a plurality in the theoretical backgrounds of these scholars; this is reflected in the way in which they consider the Hegelian thought as a whole, and in their style and attitude toward doing philosophy. For instance, the selection and use of the sources (whether Hotho's version, or the manuscript of the auditors, or both) is one of the places where this plurality can be recognized. In our papers selection, we wanted to make this plurality evident. Furthermore, we ask that invited contributors write their papers in their mother language with the conviction that the richness of perspectives, methods, and even languages can furthermore enrich the general research field, in a dialogic concept of philosophy in which differences are not flattened, but analyzed and (also polemically) discussed. For this reason the issue has a multi-linguistic format, and the reader can find papers in English, German, French, and Italian.

*L'attualità della filosofia hegeliana dell'arte come problema* (*The contemporary relevance of Hegel's Philosophy of Art as a problem*) by Francesco Campana deals with the limits and potential of the interpretations of Hegel's philosophy of art as a key to understanding our contemporaneity. Starting from a reflection on the recurring debate about the contemporary relevance of Hegelian thought in general and on art, he examines some general theoretical questions that result from this kind of interpretation. The author then considers three concrete examples of this approach and traces, thereby, the profiles of three possible hermeneutical attitudes: an 'inner' approach, characterized by a close reading of Hegel's lectures which is usually adopted by specialists of Hegelian thought (the chosen example is the work of Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert); an 'intermediate' approach, which carefully considers the textual and historical dimensions, but also proposes some 'corrections' and questions some consequences of Hegel's philosophy (the example, in this case, is the position of Robert B. Pippin); an 'external' perspective, that makes use of Hegel as inspiration and, without a technical 'He-

gelian' background, greatly benefits from some of his notions, in order to better understand the present (the case of Arthur C. Danto).

In the article «*And Why Not?*» *Hegel, Comedy, and the End of Art*, Lydia Moland addresses the Hegelian preference for comedy. In a deep examination of the literary genre of drama, Moland underlines the differences between comedy and tragedy in ancient Greece and the modern era. Ancient dramas aimed for the unity of the human and the divine, corresponding to the essence of art as the Ideal, namely as the conveyance of the Idea in sensuous form. Ancient tragedy puts forth substantial issues (family, religion, State) and combines subject and substance, as the two components of action, into a necessarily reunification after conflict. In ancient comedy – in particular, in the Old Comedy of Aristophanes – the characters' subjectivity prevails and reunites the subject with the substance through showing the individual's goal itself to be self-negating. Old Comedy, even in its predominance of subjectivity, is still oriented around the substantial. It thus betters tragedy's ability to convey the Idea in sensuous form, showing that humans are not subject to divine and social law: as something which is necessarily self-determining and free, human beings no longer need representations of the divine, because they themselves become the divine. Modern drama increases the prominence of subjectivity. Unity and necessity are weakened, and subjectivity continues to develop by other means, namely religion and philosophy. If suffering and misfortune are not justified anymore, dramatists may as well prefer happy endings. Moland claims that both a severe dismissal and a committed praise in the assessment of comedy in Hegel's *Philosophy of Art* are too extreme: on the one hand, surely Hegel does not take all comedy to be a trivial distraction, but on the other hand, the comedy – especially the Old Comedy – constitutes the apogee of art as a tragic culmination. In this way, the understanding of Hegel's assessment of comedy can shed light on Hegel's thesis of the 'end of art'. Hegel's seemingly arbitrary preference is itself – Moland suggests – systematically justified and substantiates claims about unity and necessity in art.

*Die Außenwelt der Innenwelt. Hegel über Architektur* (*The outside world of the inner world. Hegel on Architecture*) by Niklas Hebing is the first of two contributions about a particular art in the Hegel's Aesthetics, namely architecture, which has not been thoroughly investigated by the *Hegel-Forschung*. Hebing deals with the essential determinations of this individual art in Hegel's *Lectures on fine art*, with particular attention to the courses given in the semesters 1820/21 and 1823, recently edited by the author in Hegel's *Gesammelte Werke*. With both a theoretical and historical approach, he investigates the meaning of architecture: his analysis goes from symbolic architecture, which is neither beautiful nor functional, through the classical one, which is both beautiful and functional, to the romantic one, which is multi-layered because of the broken unity of the preceding notions in the modern era. Architecture is the theoretical beginning of his Aesthetics. It represents the borderline where technic ends and art begins; furthermore, it is the art in which materiality is most constrictive. Hebing considers this particular art in the context of art-philosophy and extends his reflection to the general context of Hegel's system, thus clarifying its connections to other fields, especially Philosophy of Nature, Anthropology, and Philosophy of Right. On the basis of the Hegelian notion of architecture, Hebing opens a dialogue with the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century debate about the meaning and aims of the architecture, finding in Hegel the representative of a functionalist notion of architecture, which overcomes the sterile distinction between art and technic and can be, for all intents and purposes, a form through which Absolute Spirit manifests.

The Hegelian theory of the painting is the focus of *L'expérience de la peinture et son concept* (*The experience of painting and its notion*) by Alain Patrick Olivier. The article investigates the particular art of painting in a close analysis of the yet unpublished transcript of Adolf Heimann's *Nachschrift* of the lectures on philosophy of art given in Berlin during the winter semester 1828/1829 (the edition by the author and Annemarie Gethamnn-Siefert is forthcoming). Unlike the version published by Hotho, in this manuscript we can see how Hegelian Aesthetics does not have a national and religious concept, but a cosmopolitan and humanistic one. We can further see how the concrete aspects of

the particular artistic phenomena become integrated into his general philosophical system. In regard to painting, this means that it is necessary to show the interaction between the overall backgrounds, in particular his logical background, and the work of art, which Hegel could have directly experienced in many art collections, especially in the last years of his life. The author retraces the determinations of painting in the manuscript: he moves from the *Introduction* of the lectures, where Hegel addresses the topic of the so-called ‘end of art’; then deals with the relationship between art and life through the analysis of the connection between painting and Ideal of beauty in the *First Part* of the course, he analyzes the notion of painting as intrinsically romantic art in its connection to Christianity in the *Second Part*, and examines painting as a particular art in the *Third Part*. There, Olivier highlights five determinations of this particular art: the bi-dimensional space; the appearance and the relation to the viewer; the connection between light and shadow; the interrelation between painting with the other objects and the surrounding context; the potentially unlimited character in the choice of representable subjects. Therefore, the author analyzes the historical passages of the chapter about painting, underlining the oversimplification of Hotho’s printing redaction and the coherence with the principles presented in the general chapter on the Ideal.

Gabriele Tomasi, in *La bellezza dell’ordinario. Su Hegel, la pittura olandese del Seicento e Jeff Wall* (*The Beauty of the Ordinary. On Hegel, the Dutch Painting of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, and Jeff Wall*) proposes an interesting comparison between modern and contemporary art, interpreting some works of art by following along Hegelian principles. The author takes a cue from an exhibition hosted by the Städel Museum of Frankfurt in 2002 entitled *Camera Elinga*. In this exhibition the paintings of the Dutch artist of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Pieter Janssens Elinga were drawn near the photographs of the contemporary Canadian artist Jeff Wall. Tomasi focuses in particular on Elinga’s *Interior with painter, reading lady and maid recurring* and Wall’s *Morning Cleaning*. Although they are very different as works of art, there is no total lack of points of contact, starting from the common subject of housework. Moreover, on the one hand, Janssens’ use of light brings his paintings close to photo-

graphic pictures and Wall, on the other hand, seems to resume the realistic tradition, which seemed to be interrupted during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Following a Hegelian perspective in the interpretation of the two works of art as aesthetic elevations of scenes in ordinary life, the author traces a path, which deepens topics of Hegel's Philosophy of Art, such as painting as romantic form of art, colors and appearance, the Dutch painting as formal redemption of the negligible and banal content of its subjects.

The Hegelian understanding of music is the core topic of *Musica assoluta e musica dell'Assoluto: Hegel e l'improvvisazione musicale* (*Absolute Music and Music of the Absolute: Hegel and the musical improvisation*) by Alessandro Bertinetto. In regard to this particular art, Bertinetto emphasizes the Hegelian appreciation of its performative dimension. Music, as the 'art of the Absolute', is conceived of as a free art that shows itself in the spur of the moment and actively expresses the human soul in the coincidence of interiority and exteriority. Hegelian phenomenology of music coincides with neither a romantic conception of instrumental music, according to which 'absolute' music expresses what words can not manifest, nor with a formalistic one, according to which 'absolute' music is a self-reliant play of sounds without meanings and reference points to the world. On the contrary, Hegel underlines the concrete aspect of the material execution as sensuous expression of the musician's subjectivity. The performative nature of music is expressed in the most efficacious way by the *bel canto*, the virtuosity and, above all, by improvisation, where music appears simultaneously to its creation. Improvisation shows the self-construction of musical subjectivity in real-time. It performs art as art, namely as just evanescent and partial harmony between form and content, and manifests the more intimate essence and limits of music. In doing so, it represents at the same time the essence and the limits of the very notion of art as art, which finds its 'end' in its own essence.

Gerad Gentry, in his *Hegelian Aesthetics and Tolstoy's Anna Karenina: A Dialectical Vision of Morality*, proposes an original comparison between Hegel and the Russian writer. After a panoramic description of some general Hegelian notions, such as 'concept', 'idea', 'beauty', and 'ideal', he reads *Anna Karenina* with

the aid of some of Hegel's insights drawn from his broader Philosophy of Art. More specifically, Gentry wants to use the Hegelian notion that art makes abstract ideas concretely sensuous. He dwells on the topic of love, and identifies in the novel a dialectic between two forms of love: a form of love which reflects a deontic morality grounded in duty, and a free, passionate, romantic love. The first one is represented by Anna's relation to her husband Alexey Alexandrovich; the second by her relation with Vronsky. Through a critique of some passages of Tolstoy's novel and the analysis of the concrete aspect of love, the author gives an unusual interpretation of the Hegelian notion according to which art can bring concepts to 'life'.

With *Hegel's 'End' of Art and Arte Povera*, Andrea Piras starts from a reconsideration of the debate on the 'end of art' thesis. Modern art represents the loss of the religious, ritualistic, and positive role that it played in ancient societies (especially the Greek society) and at the same time an intensification of the reflective, critic, and negative determination, which characterizes the modern collective self-consciousness. 'Post-romantic' art, namely the art after the 'end of art', transforms the very notion of art: it is not able to produce the identity between form and content, and does not even try to do so. In the fragmentary nature of modernity, art radically changes its status and becomes the sensible counterpart of the philosophical thought. On this basis, Piras traces an interpretation of the movement of the Arte Povera as a possible instance of this change. More so than others artistic examples, Arte Povera and the work of artists like Luciano Fabro or Mario Merz refuse the representation of any religious or social idols, and consider first and foremost the ordinary materiality and social critique.

As the conclusion of the issue, Francesco Valagussa's *Hegel e l'architettura gotica* deals with the somehow paradoxical status that the material art *par excellence*, namely architecture, assumes, when it achieves its deepest spiritualization in modernity. Starting from the consideration of architecture as an eminently symbolic art, the author dwells on the 'past character' of art that this individual art assumes in Christian modernity, wherein the substance becomes subject. He underlines the transition from the right angle, pro-



duced by the combination between architrave and column in classical temples, to the less and less heavy of the ogival arch of the Medieval cathedrals, wherein pillars absorb the architrave, negating and preserving it. It is a historical dialectic between the paradigm of the crystal, solid and without spirituality, and the paradigm of the tree with its heavenly ramifications, where the technical and useful dimension of the roof seems to be sublated (in the sense of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*) by the more artistic and political-religious dimension of the enclosure, which gathers the faithful community. In all actuality, the enormous spaces of the Gothic architecture exceed even the borders of the sacred enclosure: the cathedral is no longer the center of the world and becomes instead the world itself, a secular world, in a dynamic of dissolution that gets closer to the process produced by the comic.

With this issue, the editors aim to give a possible picture of contemporary research on Hegel's Philosophy of Art, with its richness of perspectives and approaches, in the hopes of contributing to further stimulation of the discussion about this field of Hegelian thought.

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