

Kant (1724-1804)

a pivotal figure in the Enlightenment and for all subsequent philosophy
respected as a major figure by both analytic and continental philosophers
though different aspects of his work are highlighted
and different interpretations of those different aspects favored

admitted that Hume woke him from his “dogmatic slumbers”
his philosophy was primarily directed toward saving the Enlightenment from Hume’s skepticism

for Kant the Enlightenment was a transition from ‘immaturity,’ a dependence upon authority,
to ‘maturity’ or autonomy, the ability to use one’s understanding without guidance from another

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781)

Kant seeks to establish the limits and underlying structure of human knowledge
draws together most of the central issues of the Enlightenment
imaginative synthesis of empiricism and rationalism
both empiricism and rationalism are following in the Cartesian project of establishing certainty
and resisting the spurious claims of religious knowledge
does not rule out religious belief but sought to purify it of unjustifiable pretensions
and superstitious remnants

empiricists hold all knowledge based on experience—on our ‘impressions’ or ‘sensations’
all knowledge is thus *a posteriori*—something we achieve only *after* having appropriate
experience

no innate ideas, mind is a *tabula rasa*

rationalists hold that important, perhaps the most important, instances of human knowledge
are *a priori*—available to us prior to or independent of experience
rationalists closer to Platonic tradition taking mathematics and logic rather than natural science
as favored models of human knowledge

Kant seeks to combine insights of both rationalists and empiricists
agrees with rationalists that there are some truths we can know *a priori*
but he seeks a more adequate explanation for such a possibility
agrees with empiricists that much of our knowledge depends on experience
but argues that they neglect the ‘formal’ contribution the mind makes
to the ‘content’ it receives from experience
all experience is thus ‘structured’ by the mind before we can make sense of it at all
rationalists undervalue the contribution of experience
empiricists fail to see the importance of the formal structure by which experience is organized

Kant’s insight allows a distinctive solution to the problem of accounting for human knowledge
Kant considered this a “Copernican revolution” in philosophy:
it is possible to have *a priori* knowledge of the form or structure of experience because it is our

minds that contribute that form to experience

Kant calls this special kind of knowledge *transcendental*

not because it is knowledge of a transcendental realm like Plato's Forms

but, much more modestly, it is knowledge of the structure of the human mind

Kant's Copernican Revolution involved a radically new conception of the human mind and thus of human knowledge

prior to Kant, both Rationalists and Empiricists assumed that the mind was something like a passive mirror of nature

we can trace this idea of knowledge that comes through passive reflection back to Plato

Kant argued that the mind is not passive at all but actively imposes order upon our experience

our concepts and our language do not thus just correspond to reality

but in some sense "set up the world"

just as Copernicus had revolutionized our conception of the universe (solar system) by positing that the earth was not at the center, but revolved like other planets around the sun

Kant argued that the ground for objective, universal scientific knowledge of the world

was not to be found outside the mind, but rather within the structure of the human mind itself

the mind sets up or "constitutes" the world in a sense

"the understanding does not derive its laws from, but prescribes them to, nature"

(Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, 1783)

the previous conception of the mind as a passive mirror of nature assumed

that if only we have the right method and if we can somehow find the source of human error

that knowledge within the human mind is an accurate reflection of the world as it is "in-itself"

Hume's skepticism had shown how this was impossible

Kant responds to this skepticism by simply giving up the idea of gaining knowledge of the world as it is "in-itself"

Kant thus makes an important distinction between

the *Phenomenal World*

and

the *Noumenal World*

the world as it appears to us

the world as it is "in-itself"

Kant accepts the conclusion of Hume's consistent empiricism:

we don't know the world as it is "in-itself" only the world "as it appears to us"

the use of human reason, even scientific knowledge, only gives us knowledge of the phenomenal world

but the world appears to us in ways that are structured by the human mind

and that structure, for Kant, is the same in all of us

the world appears to us through a necessary, and thus, universal structure of experience

Kant describes his novel approach as a 'transcendental idealism'

a description often misunderstood
idealism is usually associated with the belief that
there is no external, material world—there are only ideas
Empiricism provides a skeptical route to this belief
skeptical idealists maintain simply that we can't have certain knowledge of an external world
dogmatic idealists like Berkeley (1685-1753) go one step further and claim that they know
reality is mental

Kant's transcendental idealism is often misunderstood as idealism in this sense
(especially by analytic philosophers)
but Kant's transcendental idealism is designed to refute all forms of 'empirical' idealism
Kant claims that the world of appearances, the 'phenomenal world'
is inevitably experienced as a material world of causally interacting objects in space and time
we cannot know the world as it is 'in itself'
we only have knowledge of the world of appearances
we cannot assume that the world is exactly as it appears
but this does not mean that we only have knowledge of the contents of our minds
Kant maintains distinction between
mere 'semblance' (*Apparenz*) or 'illusion' (*Schein*) and reality
Kant thinks we can achieve objective knowledge of reality
Kant seeks to undercut what he sees as source of much metaphysical confusion
seeks to undercut transcendental *realism*—the view that regards appearances as things in
themselves

How is it that Kant thinks we can get objective knowledge of reality if all we can know is the world as it appears to us?

Here we have to return to Hume's Fork
the distinction between relations of ideas and matters of fact becomes, in Kant's language, a
distinction between

<i>Analytic</i> Statements	and	<i>Synthetic</i> Statements
these are true simply by analysis of our language and tell us nothing about the world		these tell us something about the world and thus add (synthesize) to our knowledge

Analytic statements are true by definition: "A bachelor is an unmarried male"
in Kant's language, the concept of the predicate ("is an unmarried male")
is included in the concept of the subject ("Bachelor")
they are plausible examples of *a priori* knowledge for we don't find out they are true by
observation
we don't need to do a study and find out if bachelors are all unmarried males

Synthetic statements are not necessarily true but only contingently true:

‘No woman has ever been President of the USA’

here the concept of the predicate is clearly not included in the subject

(being male is not part of the definition of President of the USA)

synthetic statements are *a posteriori*, requiring sense evidence

Against Hume, Kant held that all knowledge is not either a “relation of ideas” or a “matter of fact”

Kant argued that there must be a category of *synthetic a priori* truths

he thinks, in other words, that we can have non-trivial knowledge of the structure of experience independently of all experience

Kant thinks that we can still get objective knowledge, and thus save the Enlightenment, because the world that appears to us, appears to us through ‘categories’ of the mind *which are the same in all of us*

Kant’s assumption is that the human mind in all of us is running the same software

(Kant obviously didn’t put it in terms of ‘software’ but this seems perhaps an appropriate analogy)

the *synthetic a priori* truths are this software

what Kant meant by ‘transcendental knowledge’ is knowledge of this software

thus knowledge of the structure of our experience

knowledge of truths that are *synthetic* (they add to our knowledge—not simply tautologies) and *a priori* (and thus necessary)

Kant’s attempts to prove his claims about the necessary structure of our experience have been quite controversial

his ‘transcendental deduction’ of the ‘categories’ has been subjected to much scrutiny
difficulty of Kant’s arguments is notorious

for mainstream analytic philosophy these arguments are not considered successful

they are either unconvincing or can be reduced to analytical claims of no great significance

for analytic philosophers Kant’s crucial class of *synthetic a priori* truths turn out to be empty

analytic philosophy thus starts out from a austere interpretation of Kant

taking his strictures against traditional metaphysics

to close off all further ‘speculative’ discussion of metaphysics

in effect, the analytic tradition reverts to Hume’s view that all knowledge is either “relations of ideas” (*analytic a priori*) or “matters of fact” (*synthetic a posteriori*)

and that we should consign to the flames any views that not one or the other philosophy should thus ignore those questions that ‘it is not able to answer’

thus analytic philosophy has paid less attention to questions that, according to Kant,

human reason, and indeed, the living and acting human individual

‘is not able to ignore’

it was Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790) which opened the door to Romanticism

In the *Critique of Judgment* :

1. Kant maintained the autonomy of aesthetic judgment (as distinguished from the theoretical and the practical). Though Kant did not explicitly demarcate an independent realm of the aesthetic, he was read by later Romanticist thinkers to have indeed distinguished the aesthetic as an autonomous realm separated from the realms of nature and freedom. Later Romanticist philosophers would develop the notion of the aesthetic as an independent, autonomous realm.

2. Though Kant explicitly denied that art has "truth value" some statements in the *Critique of Judgment* seemed to contradict this view. For Kant art is a matter of pleasure, not knowledge. He does hint, however, that art can put us into contact with something that cannot be grasped through concepts. Later Romanticist philosophers would develop the notion that it is through art that man can reach truth.

3. Kant's notion of "genius" as the talent that generates "aesthetic ideas" that provide the soul that distinguishes "fine art" had a great influence on the development of Romanticism. This conception of "aesthetic genius" as distinguished from the scientific mind greatly influenced romanticism. An "aesthetic idea" is an idea for which no adequate concept can be found, and thus cannot be made intelligible by language. The notion of an "aesthetic idea" thus pointed toward the view of art as expressing the inexpressible. This also suggested that art is something more than mere pleasure.

4. In general the whole Kantian "Copernican Revolution" which suggested the mind is not just a passive mirror of nature, but that the mind imposes form and order upon experience and thus truth is in some sense both discovered *and created*.

Romanticism

nothing is more difficult to pin down than Romanticism

the term is usually applied to certain aspects of European intellectual life in late 18th and early 19th centuries, roughly between 1790-1850

Romanticism took different forms in different countries: Germany, England, France

August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845)

coined the term "Romanticism" in his Vienna lectures of 1809-11

he used it to distinguish "modern" poetry and art from the Classical

Precursors of Romanticism

there was an ongoing critique of Enlightenment during the 18th century

its sober and often moralistic 'free thinkers' were frequently condemned as atheists

and corrupters of society
there were of course conservative defenders of traditional morality and orthodox religion
but from the perspective of Enlightenment thinkers these conservatives reactions were
futile attempts to stem tide of progress
but other critics were not so easy to dismiss
they also appreciated the Enlightenment attack on superstition, dogma, and arbitrary
authority
but they also recognized dangers in the quickening tide of modernization

Rousseau (1712-1778) made fertile contribution to critique of Enlightenment
also influenced Kant, especially his moral philosophy and conception of autonomy
strongly critical of direction of civilization or modernity
contrasts 'savage' with degraded existence of civilized man
Rousseau's condemnation of evils of civilized existence is unambiguous
but he does not advocate a return to some primitive uncivilized state of nature
misleading to associate Rousseau with 'noble savage'
rejects any assumption of an original human nature

for Rousseau it is only in society that the individual becomes a responsible moral agent
as opposed to a creature of impulse
thus only in society that the individual is truly free
this notion of moral liberty and autonomy influenced Kant significantly

Rousseau's distinctive social account of human individuality
is also at heart of his notion of the 'general will'
like Hobbes and Locke he is not satisfied with 'unenlightened' justification of the state by
the 'divine right' of kings
Rousseau derives sovereignty of state from the people
government should act in accordance with 'general will'
not simply equivalent to 'will of all'
democratic institutions may not be best means of finding out what general will is
for Rousseau it can only be reached through process of negotiation and deliberation
designed to discover the common interest of society as a whole
reaching general will might involve transformation of individual particular wills
critics see this as large step toward totalitarianism
contemporaries saw this view leading to Jacobin terror of the Revolution

a near contemporary of Rousseau was Herder (1744-1803)
a German thinker whose critique of the Enlightenment was in some ways more radical
Herder held that language is not just an instrument for expressing thoughts and ideas
but was that which makes thought possible
different languages are thus not just alternative instruments for expressing the same ideas
but rather are themselves different ways of thinking
language did not then simply correspond to reality
this idea of language undermined
the Enlightenment assumption of a universal human essence
emphasizes national and cultural differences
leads toward a relativism in which
the values of different peoples are simply incommensurable
this was liberating in a German-speaking world
resentful of the dominance of French culture
though not a Romanticist, Herder's thought had an impact on the birth of Romanticism in
Germany at the beginning of the 19th century

Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805)

though not a Romanticist, Schiller is the bridge between Kant and Romanticism
he develops and extends Kant's discussion of the aesthetic
and is the first to take up Kant's suggestion of a higher role for art

in his *Letter of an Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794-95)

Schiller puts forth a history of the whole of Western Culture
in which the nobility and exaltation of Greek culture
is contrasted with the fragmentation and *alienation* of modern man
Schiller is one of the first to take up the idea of modern alienation
this sense of alienation is the result of the gap between *nature* and *freedom*
and thus the contradiction between the Enlightenment project
for a science of society (science is based on nature—a realm of necessity)
and its continuing belief in morality (based on *freedom*)

for Schiller the cure for this alienation lies in art
the aim of Schiller's aesthetic education is to establish an aesthetic state,
an ideal to which society can progress towards,
in which individual members are harmoniously related in an organic social totality
thus the alienation that results from the gap between *nature* and *freedom* is overcome
for Schiller the artist-philosopher is the aesthetic educator who leads humanity to the ideal state
Schiller thus defines the notion of the *avant-garde* that informs 20th century art

in these *Aesthetic Letters*, as they are sometimes referred to,
Schiller transforms Kant's account of aesthetic experience into

an anthropological insight into human nature
conceiving beauty as “our second creatress”
which offers us the “possibility of becoming human beings” (21st letter)
it is through art and aesthetic experience that the human being is fully developed
takes up Kant’s suggestion of the aesthetic as reuniting the realms of *nature* and *freedom*

in the 20th letter we see this notion of the aesthetic
as mediating between sensation and thought, necessity and freedom
in the aesthetic state one “does indeed act freely, is in the highest degree free from all
compulsion, but is in no wise free from laws” (44).

Schiller’s most important notion is the *Spieltrieb* (play drive)
Schiller brings together Kant’s idea of the “free play of the powers of representation”
and Fichte’s idea of the drives (*Triebe*)
and develops this notion of the *Spieltrieb* (play drive)

human experience is suspended between a “sensuous drive” (*Sinntrieb*)
which chains individuals to nature
and a “formal impulse” (*Formtrieb*) which aims to bring harmony into experience
if fragmentation is to be overcome and integration achieved
neither the rational nor the sensuous side of experience can be repressed
the *Spieltrieb* “sublates” (*aufgehoben*) the “sensuous drive” and the “form drive”

we see in the 20th letter this distinction between the “sensuous drive” and the “form-impulse”
(43)

one passes from sensation to thought through a “middle disposition” (44)
this middle disposition will later be developed as the *Spieltrieb*

according to Schiller it is in art that this play drive emerges
only in the play of art are the sensuous drive and the formal drive brought together
only in contemplating the beautiful is man harmonized
only here does man find a happy medium
between the moral law (freedom) and physical exigency (necessity)

beauty offers an instance of moral freedom being compatible with sense
it leads the sensuous man back to form and thought
and the spiritual man back to the world of sense

this idea that human beings reach their fullest potential when ‘playing’ with beauty is Schiller’s
unique contribution
it develops the Kantian notion of an aesthetic attitude as detachment from practical or intellectual
concerns

Schiller argues that aesthetic sensibility is essential for a liberal society
here there is an important distinction between aesthetic semblance and mere illusion
he follows Kant in treating art as a matter of *Schein* (semblance or illusion) and not truth
thus adhering to Kant's distinction between the aesthetic and non-aesthetic
Kant's insistence on the autonomy of aesthetic judgment led him to deny that art has "truth value"

for Schiller, we are drawn to the "free play" of art, not by any supposed revelation of truth
this is what separates both Schiller and Kant from the later Romantics
though Schiller did not see art as a source of truth
his *Aesthetic Letters* were read by younger thinkers to suggest that art could be a source of truth
and thus opens the doors to Romanticism

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854)
Schelling transposes Schiller's utopian idealism into an absolute idealism in which beauty actually constitutes the original essence of reality
in a manner similar to Kant's Third Critique
Schelling constructs a transcendental idealism to bridge the gap between nature and reason
The Philosophy of Art (1802-3) attempts a systematic philosophical articulation of the arts
forms a crucial chapter in post-Kantian idealism
plays a significant role in the emergence of the aesthetic that informs modernism

in *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) Schelling saw art as the 'organ of philosophy'
for it can see what philosophical concepts cannot: the *absolute*
with this Schelling thus turns philosophy in an aesthetic direction

this notion of art as the 'organ of philosophy'
art as the means to get to truth
art has truth status
becomes one of the foundational elements of Romanticism in art and philosophy

Schelling contends that nature and the work of art are the product of one and the same activity
an activity that is in its essence aesthetic
the only difference between the world and the work of art
is that in the former the creative activity is unconscious, whereas in the latter it is conscious
As Schelling put it:
"the objective world is only the original, still unconscious poetry of the spirit"
given his conviction that reality is poetic
it is not surprising that he sees philosophy culminating in art
only art can make objective what the philosopher represents in thought
thus philosophy, after completing its task of representation
must return to "the universal ocean of poetry from which it started out"

“art occupies the highest place for the philosopher, since it opens up to him the holy of holies, so to speak, where in primal union, as in a single flame, there burns what is sundered in nature and history and what must eternally flee from itself in life and action as in thought” (*System of Transcendental Idealism*)

German Romanticism

the flowering of German Romanticism comes with the Schlegel brothers
August Wilhelm (1767 – 1845) and Friedrich (1772 - 1829)

Primary themes of Romanticism

1) *in general, art has a preeminent role to play in human life and culture*

There is a divination of art—art has a religious significance and role in human society.
Art has a healing role—it leads to a feeling of unity of the human being with nature. The discord between man and nature that is the result of the gap between *nature* and *freedom* is replaced by a notion of “organic or aesthetic unity.” Thus, an important motif of Romanticism is that of a “circuitous journey,” a move from alienation, through spiritual crisis, to a redemptive reintegration with the cosmos.

2) *Art is a source of knowledge, it has a cognitive status*

art is seen as a manifestation, even a source, of truth
one that rivaled and even surpassed that of the analytical reason of the Enlightenment
this led to a higher value placed on art and artistic creation—a glorification of art

There is a reevaluation of the relationship between philosophy and art, or art and truth. Philosophy becomes aesthetic—art becomes the “organ of philosophy.”

a romanticist epistemology—a kind of emotional intuitionism superseding the previous domination of rationalism and empiricism
has its origins in 18th century, the “inner sense” of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson
the “sentiment” of Hume

A. Schlegel finds in the poet “those deep intuitions in which the dark riddle of our existence seems to solve itself”

3) the notion of the aesthetic as an autonomous realm, independent of the realms of *nature* and *freedom*

4) *artistic production conceived as self-expression*

some basic change in aesthetic values—eyes opened to new aesthetic vistas
new impulse to the enjoyment of feeling and emotion

the scope of great art is widened

a loosening of form offset by more individualized, poignant, presentation of personal emotions

artistic production becomes conceived as essentially an act of self-expression
the critic becomes more concerned with the artist—his sincerity, details of biography, inner spiritual life

Victor Hugo: “What indeed is a poet? A man who feels strongly and expresses his feelings in a more expressive language”

this notion we find already in Voltaire: “Poetry is almost nothing but feeling”

thus the imitation theory of art is set aside, or relegated to a subordinate position

a form of expression theory develops

focus is not on the object, but on the artist’s state of mind

the spontaneity and intensity of the artists emotions

Wordsworth: “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”

the parallel of poetry and painting that dominated aesthetic thought since the Renaissance

gives way to a new parallel between poetry and music

for music is the pure expression of feeling

in an essay on Beethoven, E.T.A. Hoffman said of music:

“It is the most romantic of all the arts—one might say the only genuinely romantic art—for its own sole subject is the infinite”

5) *exaltation of the imagination*

this claim to knowledge gave rise to a new theory of the imagination

now it was not only a faculty of inventing and reassembling materials

but a faculty of seizing directly upon important truths

influence of the Kantian revolution which gave a sense of creation to the mind

the mind no longer viewed as passive discoverer of truth but somehow active, creative

truth is both discovered and created

on the Continent, Joubert and then Baudelaire: “Imagination is, as it were, a divine faculty, which perceives directly, without the use of philosophical methods, the secret and intimate relationships of things...”

6) *the notion of organic, or aesthetic unity*

also important is the concept of *organism*, the notion of *organic unity* or *aesthetic unity*

one of Coleridge’s greatest contributions to romanticist aesthetics

Plato and Aristotle compared a literary work to a living animal

the notion of the world of nature as a living thing (Gaia hypothesis) goes back to Plato

Goethe:

a deep sense of the organic unity of all nature

and of man as a part of nature

works of art grow out of, and express man’s unity with nature

again, here the important thing is the notion of art as revealing of nature and of thus having a higher truth than science

Shelley: “A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth”

7) *The celebration of artistic genius*

art has a religious dimension

two tendencies in thinking about the artist:

1) the artist as divinely inspired (in a positive way Plato couldn't imagine)

Novalis: “The genuine poet is always a priest”

Goethe calls the artist “God's anointed”

Hugo: “Nature is God's immediate creation, and art is what God creates through the mind of man”

2) the artist as Promethean figure, rival of both Nature and God, cursed with a tragic but glorious doom

Romanticism vs the Enlightenment

Romanticism shared with the Enlightenment some common attributes

both were “humanist” in their high estimation of human being

and their concern with the human perspective on the universe

both saw this world and nature as a setting for a human drama

both looked back to classical culture as high point for human civilization

both fought against oppressive authoritarianism of medieval period

both celebrated human freedom, individual genius, the bold exploration of the new

but there were profound differences between Romanticism and the Enlightenment

the Romantics perceived the world as a unitary organism instead of a lifeless machine

Romanticism arose partly as a result of a loss of faith in reason

The Romantics read Kant as suggesting a higher role for art—

that art could go where reason had failed

the genius of artistic imagination could gain access to the *thing-in-itself*

art was viewed, not like Plato three steps removed from truth, but as a source of knowledge

the Romantics radicalized the Kantian view that the human mind is not just a passive mirror but is active, artistic, creative in shaping the world

Romanticism thus valued imaginative and spiritual aspirations rather than the scientific the genius of Beethoven or Goethe over that of Newton

the powers of individual expression and creativity over that of theoretical calculation

for the Romantics nature was not an object for experimentation and technological manipulation but rather a source of mystery and revelation

Hegel (1770-1831)

as a young man Hegel was an ardent Romanticist
in college he was a roommate with Schelling and Hölderlin
his mature philosophy shows a Romanticist influence and yet he breaks with Romanticism in turning to reason and philosophy rather than art as a source of knowledge

attempts synthesis of Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment themes
influenced by Rousseau and Herder, Goethe, Hölderlin, as well as Kant

Hegel followed Kant in accepting that reason gives us knowledge of the *Phenomenal World*

the world as it appears as a phenomenon in consciousness
however, he rejects Kant's assumption (shared by the prior tradition) of a *Noumenal World*, a world as it is in-itself apart from how it appears in human consciousness

in other words, the world just is as it appears as a phenomenon of human consciousness
there simply is no point of talking about a world as it is in-itself
thus Hegel's is a "holistic worldview in which consciousness and the world are not separate but inseparably integrated" (Solomon, 291)

at first glance this might seem to imply the most pernicious relativism
in which the world is radically different for different human consciousnesses
with no way of evaluating one worldview as better than another

but for Hegel all individual consciousnesses are a manifestation of the Absolute—Spirit or Mind realizing itself through human consciousness
his masterwork, *die Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807)
translated as *Phenomenology of Spirit* or *Phenomenology of Mind*
traces the development of a process of Self-realization of *Geistes* through human consciousness

in the *Phenomenology* Hegel proposes to begin from a position without presuppositions to examine consciousness from the inside as it appears to itself
a phenomenology of *Geistes* is an exposition of knowledge as a *phenomenon* as it actually *appears* in consciousness
(the word "phenomenon" is etymologically connected to the word "appearance")

Hegel thus “suggests that we give up the view that the self is essentially a feature of the individual: the self—or ‘Spirit’—is shared by all of us” (Solomon, 291)
we all participate in the unfolding of Spirit through history
thus Hegel’s philosophy is an all-encompassing system which “sought to relate and unify man and nature, spirit and matter, human and divine, time and eternity” (Tarnas, 379)

Hegel referred to his philosophy as an “Absolute Idealism”
in contrast to Kant’s “Transcendental Idealism”
reality, for Hegel, is simply the product of this Absolute Spirit moving through history
the development of human history then is regarded as a series of successive stages of Spirit’s journey toward Self-realization

thus any particular worldview is not just as valid as any other (relativism)
any particular worldview is thus measured by its place in history, its place in the development of Spirit’s Self-realization
“The way we view the world is already determined by our place in history, our language, and our society” (Solomon, 292)

each worldview thus emerges within a particular historical context
at a particular stage in Spirit’s journey through history
there is the sense that all views or forms of consciousness are “all moving toward some final end—the correct view” (Solomon, 292)

Hegel thought he understood how the process of history worked
his famous account of this process is called the “dialectic” of history
“dialectic” is etymologically related to the word “dialogue”
in Plato we have the “dialectic” as a process of dialogue
“a conversation between two people who, starting from opposing perspectives on an issue, eventually arrive at a position that preserves the insights of each” (Guignon & Pereboom, 3)

Hegel’s dialectic develops according to a three stage pattern
from *thesis* to *antithesis* to *synthesis*
first there is a *thesis*
the next stage emerges as a negation of the *thesis* and is thus the *antithesis*
the next stage is a negation of the negation leading to a *synthesis*
this *synthesis* involves a special double movement of both canceling and uniting
Hegel uses the verb *aufheben* which has this double meaning in German
“it signifies conserving, *preserving*, and at the same time also making cease, *making an end*” (Hegel, 181)

when something is *aufgehoben* it is both cancelled and preserved

“Something is *aufgehoben* only insofar as it has entered into a union with its opposite”
(Hegel, 181)

thus in the final stage of the dialectic the original *thesis* and its *antithesis* are *aufgehoben*
they are negated or cancelled but then also preserved in a higher unity

the resulting *synthesis* can then be a new *thesis* for further development

history thus moves in an ascending spiral

eventually reaching a standpoint of “absolute knowing”

Hegel thus “shows how consciousness evolves through a series of transformations
towards increasingly developed forms. Each form of consciousness (like each stage of
history) contain tensions or contradictions which render it incomplete and unstable, so
that it is ultimately bound to give way dialectically to more adequate forms” (West, 39)

the scope of Hegel’s task is immense to say the least

he “manages to compress the history of morality, art, religion and philosophy into the
stages of his phenomenology of mind” (West, 39)

Hegel thought the process of history was a rational process

with each stage a further step forward in a rational process

until at the end the Absolute is reached

at this Absolute standpoint reality is conceived as maximally rational

reality becomes the maximally rational

for Hegel the rational is the real and the real is the rational

thus, for Hegel, “Reason governs the world and has consequently governed its history”

Hegel thought the dialectic of spirit culminates in his own philosophy

in his philosophy spirit comes to the fullest and most fully rational self-consciousness

a self-consciousness equivalent to the highest possible realization of freedom

you know you are at the end when you’ve reached a stage of consciousness without any
further internal contradictions—where knowledge is no longer compelled to go beyond
itself

and in his philosophy he thought that consciousness had come to this absolute standpoint

perhaps the most famous example of the dialectical process in the *Phenomenology*

is the development of spirit through stages of political organization

thesis: the family—here individuals all know their place, and act for the benefit of the
whole family which is governed by the rule of the father

antithesis: the individual— here individuals break from the family and seek their own
individual interests (capitalist society)

synthesis: the state—here individuals realize the futility of radical individualism and return to a kind of family again, this time the state which considers the interest of the collective over that of the individual

The influence of Hegel upon Marx was of course significant
Marx just threw out the Hegelian idea that the process of history was a development of spirit
Marx's philosophy was thus a "dialectical materialism"
the communist state was the final stage in the political development of history

Hegel (and Marx) arrogantly claimed to stand at the end of this process of history in a sense, thus claiming to know which way history was to develop
much of the reaction against Hegelianism in the later half of the 19th century was a reaction against Hegel's faith in reason and the arrogance of Hegel's absolutism

The lasting influence of Hegel is his historical approach to philosophy
here truth itself becomes historical, a process rather than a static correspondence to something unchanging

Hegel's philosophy triumphed in Germany in the first half of the 19th century
the next generation of philosophers, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Marx, all developed in reaction against Hegel's philosophy
apparently Nietzsche never read Kierkegaard or Marx though he was certainly aware of both philosophers
Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are both considered pre-cursors to Existentialism

Schopenhauer (1788 – 1860)

Schopenhauer's philosophy develops out of Romanticism
celebrating art, especially music, as the means to the highest knowledge

in *The World as Will and Representation* (1844)

Schopenhauer takes Kant's distinction between:

the Phenomenal World
the world as it appears to us

and

the Noumenal World
the world as it is "in-itself"

and recasts it as the distinction between:

the World as Representation

and

the World as Will

Schopenhauer further connects the *will* that is the world, as it is in-itself, with Plato's eternal *Ideas*:

First of all, however, the following very essential remark. I hope that in the preceding book I have succeeded in producing the conviction that what in the Kantian philosophy is called the *thing-in-itself*, and appears therein as so significant but obscure and paradoxical doctrine, is, if reached by the entirely different path we have taken, nothing but the *will* in the sphere of this concept, widened and defined in the way I have stated. [. . .] Further, I hope that, after what has been said, there will be no hesitation in recognizing again in the definite grades of the objectification of that will, which forms the in-itself of the world, what Plato called the *eternal Ideas* or unchangeable forms. [. . .]

Now if for us the will is the *thing-in-itself*, and the *Idea* is the immediate objectivity of that will at a definite grade, then we find Kant's thing-in-itself and Plato's *Idea*, for him the only "truly being"—those two great and obscure paradoxes of the two greatest philosophers of the West—to be, not exactly identical, but yet very closely related. . . . (*The World as Will and Representation* §31)

Against Hegel, Schopenhauer argues that reason is subordinate to the will:

Thus, originally and by its nature, knowledge is completely the servant of the will, and, like the immediate objects which, by the application of the law of causality, becomes the starting-point of knowledge, is only objectified will. [. . .] Therefore, knowledge that serves the will really knows nothing more about objects only in so far as they exist at such a time, in such a place, in such and such circumstances, from such and such causes, and in such and such effects—in a word, as particular things. If all these relations were eliminated, the objects also would have disappeared for knowledge, just because it did not recognize in them anything else. We must also not conceal the fact that what the sciences consider in things is also essentially nothing more than all this, namely their relations, the connections of time and space, the causes of natural changes, the comparison of forms, the motives of events, and thus merely relations. [. . .] Now as a rule, knowledge remains subordinate to the service of the will, as indeed it came into being for

this service; in fact, it sprang from the will, so to speak, as the head from the trunk. (*The World as Will and Representation* §33)

Kant thought the noumenal was unknowable
 even though we can make assured postulates about it on moral grounds
 Schopenhauer's original and striking suggestion:
 the thing in itself is really an irrational and limitless urge
 he called it "the Will to Live"
 the phenomenal world thus becomes the "objectification" of the primal Will
 the Will is sheer striving, without direction, goal or end

As soon as knowledge, the world as representation is abolished, nothing in general is left but mere will, blind impulse. That it should obtain objectivity, should become representation, immediately supposes subject as well as object; but that this objectivity should be pure, complete, adequate objectivity of the will, supposes the object as Idea, free from the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, and the subject as pure subject of knowledge, free from individuality and from servitude to the will.

Now whoever has, in the manner stated, become so absorbed and lost in the perception of nature that he exists only as purely knowing subject, becomes in this way immediately aware that, as such, he is the condition and hence the supporter, of the world and of all objective existence, for this now shows itself as dependent on his existence. He therefore draws nature into himself, so that he feels it to be only an accident of his own being. In this sense Byron says:

Are not the mountains, waves and skies, a part
 Of me and of my soul, as I of them?"

But how could the person who feels this regard himself as absolutely perishable in contrast to imperishable nature? Rather will he be moved by the consciousness of what the *Upanishad* of the Veda expresses: "I am all this creation collectively, and besides me there exists no other being." (*The World as Will and Representation* §34)

Schopenhauer now reveals where art comes into the pictured—it is through the genius of the artist that one has access to the will itself:

But now, what kind of knowledge is it that considers what continues to exist outside and independently of all relations, but which alone is really essential to the world, the true content of its phenomena, that which is subject to no change, and is therefore known with equal truth for all time, in a word, the *Ideas* that are the immediate and adequate objectivity of the thing-in-itself, of the will? It is *art*, the work of genius. It repeats the eternal Ideas apprehended through pure contemplation, the essential and abiding element in all the phenomena of the world. According to the material in which it repeats, it is sculpture, painting, poetry, or music. Its only source is knowledge of the Ideas; its sole aim is communication of this knowledge. Whilst science, following the restless and unstable stream of the fourfold forms of reasons or grounds and consequents, is with every end it attains again and again directed farther, and can never find an ultimate goal or complete satisfaction, any more than by running we can reach the point where the clouds touch the horizon; art, on the contrary, is everywhere at its goal. For it plucks the object of its contemplation from the stream of the world's course, and holds it isolated before it. [. . .]

Only through the pure contemplation described above, which becomes absorbed entirely in the object, are the Ideas comprehended, and the nature of *genius* consists precisely in the preeminent ability for such contemplation. Now as this demands a complete forgetting of our own person and of its relations and connexions, the *gift of genius* is nothing but the most complete *objectivity*, i.e., the objective tendency of the

mind, as opposed to the subjective directed to our own person, i.e., to the will. Accordingly, genius is the capacity to remain in perception, to remove from the service of the will the knowledge which originally existed only for this service. In other words, genius is the ability to leave entirely out of sight our own interest, our willing, and our aims, and consequently to discard entirely our own personality for a time, in order to remain *pure knowing subject*, the clear eye of the world. . . .(*The World as Will and Representation* §36)

The genius is distinguished from the common man:

For genius to appear in an individual, it is as if a measure of the power of knowledge must have fallen to his lot far exceeding that required for the service of an individual will; and this superfluity of knowledge having become free, now becomes the subject purified of will, the clear mirror of the inner nature of the world. This explains the animation, amounting to disquietude, in men of genius, since the present can seldom satisfy them, because it does not fill their consciousness. This gives them that restless zealous nature, that constant search for new objects worthy of contemplation, and also that longing, hardly ever satisfied, for men of like nature and stature to whom they may open their hearts. The common mortal, on the other hand, entirely filled and satisfied by the common present, is absorbed in it, and finding everywhere his like, has that special ease and comfort in daily life which are denied to the man of genius. Imagination has been rightly recognized as an essential element of genius; indeed, it has sometimes been regarded as identical with genius, but this is not correct. The objects of genius as such are the eternal Ideas, the persistent, essential forms of the world and of all its phenomena. [. . .] Therefore the man of genius requires imagination, in order to see in things not what nature has actually formed, but what she endeavored to form, yet did not bring about, because of the conflict of her forms with one another. . . .(*The World as Will and Representation* §36)

Schopenhauer comments on the fine line between genius and madness:

It is often remarked that genius and madness have a side where they touch and even pass over into each other, and even poetic inspiration has been called a kind of madness; *amabilis insania*, as Horace calls it; and in the introduction to *Oberon* Wieland speaks of “amiable madness.” Even Aristotle, as quoted by Seneca, is supposed to have said “There has been no great mind without an admixture of madness.” Plato expresses it in the above mentioned myth of the cave by saying that those who outside the cave have seen the true sunlight and the things that actually are (the Ideas), cannot afterwards see within the cave any more, because their eyes have grown unaccustomed to the darkness; they no longer recognize the shadow-forms correctly. They are therefore ridiculed for their mistakes by those others who have never left that cave and those shadow-forms. Also in the *Phaedrus* (245 A), he distinctly says that without a certain madness there can be no genuine poet, in fact (249 D) that everyone appears mad who recognizes the eternal Ideas in fleeting things. . . .(*The World as Will and Representation* §36)

Here Schopenhauer points out that there is some element of the genius in all of us—and then he will go on to emphasize what distinguishes the genius and then, exactly, what the work of art is:

Now, according to our explanation, genius consists in the ability to know, independently of the principles of sufficient reason, not individual things which have their existence only in the relation, but the Ideas of such things, and in the ability to be, in face of these, the correlative of the Idea, and hence no longer individual, but pure subject of knowing. Yet this ability must be inherent in all men in a lesser and different degree, as

otherwise they would be just an incapable of enjoying works of art as of producing them. Generally, they would have no susceptibility at all to the beautiful and to the sublime; indeed, these words could have no meaning for them. We must therefore assume as existing in all men that power of recognizing in things their Ideas, of divesting themselves for a moment of their personality, unless indeed there are some who are not capable of any aesthetic pleasure at all. The man of genius excels them only in the far higher degree and more continuous duration of this kind of knowledge. These enable him to retain that thoughtful contemplation necessary for him to repeat what is thus known in a voluntary and international work, such repetition being the work of art. Through this he communicates to others the Idea he has grasped. Therefore this Idea remains unchanged and the same, and hence aesthetic pleasure is essentially one and the same, whether it be called forth by a work of art, or directly by the contemplation of nature and of life. The work of art is merely a means of facilitating that knowledge in which this pleasure consists. That the Idea comes to us more easily from the work of art than directly from nature and from reality, arises solely from the fact that the artist, who knew only the Idea and not reality, clearly repeated in his work only the Idea, separated it out from reality, and omitted all disturbing contingencies. The artist lets us peer into the world through his eyes. (*The World as Will and Representation* §37)

Schopenhauer a pessimist: all willing springs from suffering:

All *willing* springs from lack, from deficiency, and thus from suffering. Fulfillment brings this to an end; yet for one wish that is fulfilled there remain at least ten that are denied. [. . .] No attained object of willing can give a satisfaction that lasts and no longer declines, but it is always like the alms thrown to a beggar, which relieves him today so that his misery may be prolonged till tomorrow. Therefore, so long as our consciousness is filled by our will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with its constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we never obtain lasting happiness or peace. (*The World as Will and Representation* §38)

since in willing, which we do all the time, we are trying to change the state we are in
it follows that this state is felt to be unsatisfactory
but as soon as we achieve what we are willing, we are propelled into willing something else
this willing is the essential nature of everything
thus the world is a scene of perpetual frustration and conflict
but there are certain circumstances where we are able to suspend, if only temporarily, the activity
of willing—primarily in aesthetic experience
accepts here Kant’s notion of ‘disinterested contemplation’

When, however, an external cause or inward disposition suddenly raises us out of the endless stream of willing, and snatches knowledge from the thralldom of the will, the attention is now no longer directed to the motives of willing, but comprehends things free from their relation to the will. Thus it considers things without interest, without subjectivity, purely objectively; it is entirely given up to them in so far as they are merely representations, and not motives. Then all at once the peace, always sought but always escaping us on that first path of willing, comes to us of its own accord, and all is well with us. (*The World as Will and Representation* §38)

The experience of the *sublime* is particularly important for Schopenhauer:

There is a slight challenge to abide in pure knowledge, to turn away from all willing, and precisely in this way we have a transition from the feeling of the beautiful to that of the sublime. It is the faintest trace of the sublime in the beautiful, and beauty itself appears here only in a slight degree. The following is an example almost as weak.

Let us transport ourselves to a very lonely region of boundless horizons, under a perfectly cloudless sky, trees and plants in the perfectly motionless air, no animals, no human beings, no moving masses of water, the profoundest silence. Such surroundings are as it were a summons to seriousness, to contemplation with complete emancipation from all willing and its cravings; but it is just this that gives to such a scene of mere solitude and profound peace a touch of the sublime. For, since it affords no objects, either favorable or unfavorable, to the will that is always in need of strife and attainment, there is left only the state of pure contemplation, and whoever is incapable of this is abandoned with shameful ignominy to the emptiness of unoccupied will, to the torture and misery of boredom. (*The World as Will and Representation* §39)

Therefore if, for example, I contemplate a tree aesthetically, i.e., with artistic eyes, and thus recognize not it but its Idea, it is immediately of no importance whether it is this tree of its ancestor that flourished a thousand years ago, and whether the contemplator is this individual. Or any other living anywhere at any time. The particular thing and the knowing individual are abolished with the principle of sufficient reason, and nothing remains but the Idea and the pure subject of knowing, which together constitute the adequate objectivity of the will at this grade. And the Idea is released not only from time but also from space; for the Idea is not really this spatial form which floats before me, but its expression, its pure significance, its innermost being, disclosing itself and appealing to me; and it can be wholly the same, in spite of great difference in the spatial relations of the form. (*The World as Will and Representation* §41)

art thus exists and justifies itself as a means of escape from the tyranny of will and the misery of existence

art alone makes life at times tolerable

leads to a Buddhist renunciation of desire and selfhood

the aesthetic experience leads to knowledge of the Platonic Idea

puts to sleep the restless craving of the Will

for a time deadens the pain of being

Therefore, those eternally praiseworthy masters of art expressed the highest wisdom perceptibly in their works. Here is the summit of all art that has followed the will in its adequate objectivity, namely in the Ideas, through all the grades, from the lowest where it is affected, and its nature is unfolded, by causes, then where it is similarly affected by stimuli, and finally by motives. And now art ends by presenting the free self-abolition of the will through the one great quieter that dawns on it from the most perfect knowledge of its own nature. (*The World as Will and Representation* §48)

very clearly sees this experience of art and the knowledge that comes with it

as different from science and “viewing things from the principle of sufficient reason

art is essentially a cognitive enterprise

with its own special object of knowledge—the Platonic Ideas

in aesthetic experience we become pure will-less subjects of knowledge

works of art exist to present Ideas

each art is specialized with respect to content

architecture: the conflict between gravity and rigidity

sculpture: expression of human beauty and grace

painting: traits of human character

literature (lyric, epic and dramatic poetry): human character traits, natures of highly individual people

summit of poetical art is tragedy

Tragedy is to be regarded, and is recognized, as the summit of poetic art, both as regards the greatness of the effect and the difficulty of the achievement. For the whole of our discussion, it is very significant and worth noting that the purpose of this highest poetical achievement is the description of the terrible side of life. The unspeakable pain, the wretchedness and misery of mankind, the triumph of wickedness, the scornful mastery of chance, and the irretrievable fall of the just and the innocent are all here presented to us; and here is to be found a significant hint as to the nature of the world and of existence. It is the antagonism of the will with itself which is here most completely unfolded at the highest grade of its objectivity, and which comes into fearful prominence. [. . .] Here and there it reaches thoughtfulness and is softened more or less by the light of knowledge, until at last in the individual case this knowledge is purified and enhanced by suffering itself. It then reaches the point where the phenomenon, the veil of Maya, no longer deceives it. It sees through the form of the phenomenon, the *principium individuationis*; the egoism resting on this expires with it. The *motives* that were previously so powerful now lose their force, and instead of them, the complete knowledge of the real nature of the world, acting as a *quieter* of the will, produces resignation, the giving up not merely of life, but of the whole will-to-live itself. (*The World as Will and Representation* §51)

tragedy brings us face to face with the misery of life

shows life in all its terror and futility

stripping away the veil of illusion

shows “the strife of the will with itself”

tragedy thus produces resignation

the surrender not merely of life, but of the very will to live

Schopenhauer then focuses on music and gives it an exalted role

The (Platonic) Ideas are the adequate objectification of the will. To stimulate the knowledge of these by depicting individual things (for works of art are themselves always such) is the aim of all the other arts (and is possible with a corresponding change in the knowing subject). Hence all of them objectify the will only indirectly, in other words, by means of the Ideas. As our world is nothing but the phenomenon or appearance of the Ideas in plurality through entrance into the *principium individuationis* (the form of knowledge possible to the individual as such), music, since it passes over the Ideas, is also quite independent of the phenomenal world, positively ignores it, and, to a certain extent, could still exist even if there were no world at all, which cannot be said of the other arts. Thus music is as *immediate* an objectification and copy of the whole *will* as the world itself is, indeed as the Ideas are, the multiple phenomenon of which constitutes the world of individual things. Therefore music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a *copy of the will itself*, the objectivity of which is the Ideas. For this reason the effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than is that of the other arts, for these others speak only of the shadow, but music of the essence. [. . .] (*The World as Will and Representation* §52)

music “stands alone, quite cut off from all the other arts. In it we do not recognize the copy or

repetition of any Idea of existence in the world”
It is the copy of the will itself

this philosophy of music had a major role in late 19th century reflection on musical aesthetics
Schopenhauer’s philosophy had impact on Wagner, shaped transition from early to later works
a transition from a more fully Romantic conception
opera as an ideal drama in which all the arts are synthesized to produce the most powerful
emotional expression

the later view emphasizes music as the greatest of all arts

for Schopenhauer: we have art so as to learn how to die

The pleasure of everything beautiful, the consolation afforded by art, the enthusiasm of the artist, which enables him to forget the cares of life, this one advantage of the genius over other men alone compensating him for the suffering that is heightened in proportion to the clearness of consciousness, and for the desert loneliness among a different race of men, all this is due to the fact that, as we shall see later on, the in-itself of life, the will, existence itself, is a constant suffering, and is partly woeful, partly fearful. The same thing, on the other hand, as representation alone, purely contemplated, or repeated through art, free from pain, presents us with a significant spectacle. This purely knowable side of the world and its repetition in any art is the element of the artist. He is captivated by a consideration of the spectacle of the will’s objectification. He sticks to this, and does not get tired of contemplating it, and of repeating it in his descriptions. Meanwhile, he himself bears the cost of producing that play; in other words, he himself is the will objectifying itself and remaining in constant suffering. That pure, true, and profound knowledge of the inner nature of the world now becomes for him an end in itself; at it he stops. Therefore it does not become for him a quieter of the will [. . .]; it does not deliver him for life for ever, but only for a few moments. For him it is not the way out of life, but only an occasional consolation in it, until his power, enhanced by this contemplation, finally becomes tired of the spectacle, and seizes the serious side of things. (*The World as Will and Representation* §52)

***A note on these lecture notes: these notes are partly my own summaries and partly taken from the following sources.

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