

Mediations

Journal of the Marxist Literary Group



Volume 29, Number 2, Spring 2016 • **Dossier: Lukács 2016**

Art as Misunderstanding

György Lukács

"The first plan of an independent systematic aesthetics occurred to me in Florence in the winter of 1911/2. I worked on it in Heidelberg between 1912-14... Looked at from the outside this work was interrupted by the outbreak of the War." Thus Lukács, in the Preface to *Die Eigenart des Aesthetischen*, the major work of his old age. A few months before his death he handed three chapters of this early work, the only ones which, it was thought at the time, had survived, to some of his disciples, with the request that they prepare them for the printer as part of an edition of his early work. After his death, when looking through his papers, further parts of the manuscript were found, four chapters altogether. Some of the material is in holograph, some is typed, some is in both forms.

One thing is unambiguously supported by Lukács's correspondence of that period: the outbreak of the First World War only temporarily interrupted work on the "first" aesthetics. In 1915, after completing *The Theory of the Novel*, he went back to it, and started to rewrite the work as a whole on the basis of a plan that he had changed in many respects. The surviving material is really part of two works: the 1912-14 MS, one of the typed copies of which carries the title *Philosophie der Kunst*, and the 1915-17 one, which Lukács always referred to as the *Aesthetics*.

What follows is the first chapter of the 1912-14 *Philosophie der Kunst*.

•

Any aesthetics which are to be set up without illegitimate assumptions must begin with the following question: "Works of art exist — how are they possible?" This formulation of the question, however, does not in itself provide the possibility of answering it. The manner in which the "fact" of art presents itself to us remains unclarified, despite the recognition of this facticity of art and the need to formulate the questions that consequently arise. The whole of the following argument depends on the extent to which we succeed in making clear the existence of the work of art as the one and only fact relevant to aesthetics, and thereby indicating the correct way of

progressing to further questions. If we now proceed to reflect on what the fact that works of art exist really means, we have to affirm that there are certain things created by man which, although they bear the mark of the personality that created them, are able to exercise a direct effect entirely independent of that personality through the force of their inherent complex of form and material: effects which in their nature as experience cannot be clearly differentiated from those of the ordinary world of experience, but which nonetheless show aspects of a normative attitude, that is, a reference to value.¹ There is little to object to in this determination of the work of art, of which the immanent complete-in-itself character (*In-sich-Vollendetsein*) of its structure and the direct yet normative manner of its effect are the essential features; only the actual viewpoint itself could be called in question, which regards the work as the “fact” of aesthetics and taking this fact as the point of departure attempts to construe aesthetics with the use of the Kantian formulation of the problem. Here, we have two other important possibilities. In the first place it is possible in theory that one does not wish to acknowledge aesthetic value in the work of art, not even in its highest or exclusively significant manifestations, but to find this value in a — consciously or unconsciously — metaphysically conceived concept of beauty, and one then proceeds to examine its objectivations in art and nature more closely, with the result that the only importance ascribed to the work of art is the realization of the aesthetic value and it remains an open question whether the work of art is a higher type of objectivation of beauty than nature. Or, in the second place, one can start from the types of human attitudes toward “the beautiful” (or, possibly, toward art) and attempt to discover the normative element in them, and then only acknowledge as art all those works which regularly evoke this normative attitude. It is certainly not our intention here to attack these two views, which in themselves give rise to many ramifications, nor to justify our question by criticizing them; the argument that follows should include the debatable points as well as the justification as an immanent whole, and it is only occasionally, when elucidating particular questions, that we intend to discuss contrary views more closely. At this point we are only trying to make the following introductory remarks.

The concept of “the beautiful” is undoubtedly of metaphysical origin. In a metaphysical systematization of the totality of existence this concept can certainly be treated purely in accordance with its hierarchical connection with concepts placed above it or subordinated to it, and its own specific objectivations (natural and artistic beauty) deduced from it. The only question is whether this system does not lead to the elimination of art, that is, to the result that the immanent enclosed-in-itself work of art, created by human effort, is bound to appear as something ephemeral, or even something to be rejected. The metaphysical justification of this view can only be decided in a different context; here it is only necessary to emphasize that such a metaphysical approach will not explain the fact of the existence of such works of art, but will only judge (or condemn) it. Our first concern here is to understand how

works of art are possible, and therefore, for methodological reasons, any view that cannot explain its admitted facticity must be rejected, and, as already mentioned, the metaphysical problem of art can only be discussed after its possibility and its essence have been apprehended. But if the systematic-metaphysical deduction of “the beautiful” (and from beauty, art) is not to be accepted as something that methodologically precedes aesthetic investigations, then the question must be asked: how do aesthetics, which are centered on the value of beauty, arrive at a clear concept of beauty at all? To infer the norm itself from the normative attitude is obviously a vicious circle, for how is one justified in investing certain types of attitude with the — unknown and undefined — value corresponding to the norms, and neglecting others, when the value itself, which makes this choice possible, has not yet been found? Nor — let us add — can it be found this way. Every new system of aesthetics that is less interested in the final metaphysical attitude to the “fact” of art than in the apprehension of its totality, is confronted with ever-increasing difficulties resulting from the historically intensified ambiguity of the concept of the beautiful. In the first place, beauty is only one element in the generally acknowledged aesthetic attitude; many others, the sublime, the comical, et cetera, are found in juxtaposition with it; secondly, the domain of validity of this central aesthetic value (in itself ambiguous) must not only cover the attitude toward art, but also the attitude toward nature. Two ways of clarification are possible here: either the metaphysical concept of beauty will be unconsciously selected as the guiding principle of choice, or the historically acknowledged types of attitude toward the work of art will be examined, and those attitudes toward nature that are similar to them will also be included in aesthetics. In the first case, a return has been made, in a veiled form, to deductive-metaphysical aesthetics, though due to the more imprecise premises put forward, in an essentially less lucid manner; in the second case, it is our original question that is formulated, but again more ambiguously. That natural beauty exists at all can only be demonstrated if either a receptive attitude toward nature is shown to be both necessary and regular, and necessarily identical with the attitude adopted toward works of art (and this attitude has to be assumed as already recognized), or if the objective inner structure of the beauty of nature and of the beauty of art is the same in its essence (and this could only be demonstrable in a metaphysical philosophy of nature, which however, even for the sake of a pure comparison, could avoid facing our question about the work of art). As we can see, the question of whether the methodology of aesthetics should be centered on the work of art or on the beautiful immediately brings the problem of natural beauty, which is the vital question for aesthetics as a whole, to the fore.

From a purely methodological point of view the problem can be formulated as follows: is there a necessary correspondence between the pure immanence of the aesthetic experience (the character of which we can consider, since Kant, as being clearly recognized) and an object adequate to it? If the answer is in the affirmative, two possibilities emerge. First, that natural beauty as an essential element must

be excluded from aesthetics, since in this case the immanence (the Kantian “disinterestedness”) is only the subjective attitude that necessarily corresponds to and originates from the intended and achieved immanence of the work of art, and a similar attitude towards “nature” depends entirely on a “fortunate coincidence” of events in nature which makes a similar attitude possible but — owing to its purely coincidental character — never necessary; at the most therefore there are experiences connected with nature that are like the aesthetically normative attitude, but there is no aesthetics of nature corresponding to an aesthetics of art. Second, that natural beauty is saved because it is the result of objective forces directed deliberately toward it, the aim of nature, the revelation of its essence, in a word because an aesthetics of nature exists and the categories which, because they deal with the objective structure of nature are part of the philosophy of nature, and because they create a normative-aesthetic structure, are aesthetically constitutive; in other words, aesthetics and the philosophy of nature coincide or at least jointly occupy a domain which is very important for both.

But if the question formulated above is answered in the negative, the correspondence between the objective immanence of the work of art and the subjective immanence of the aesthetic attitude has become accidental; nature, as well as art, can indeed evoke this immanence of the experience, but neither nature nor art necessarily evoke it. Art has thereby lost every value of its own: what it is able to accomplish is not its own necessary consequence, nor is it unique in accomplishing it. What is essential is the subjective immanence of the experience which as such is complete-in-itself (*in-sich-vollendet*), and which is only aroused by the object, but not produced; consequently, for the subject the decisive emphasis lies on the attitude itself, and in so far as the attitude does not remain enclosed-in-itself (*abgeschlossen*) it is a preparation for another subjective attitude: the ethical attitude. If, however, despite all this, the object here also takes on importance, it will rather be nature than art.

“But since it also interests reason... that nature should at least show some trace or give a sign that it contains in itself some ground for assuming a lawful correspondence of its products with our satisfaction that is independent of all interest... consequently the mind cannot reflect on the beauty of *nature* without finding itself at the same time to be interested in it” — says Kant.² Whether and how this also abolishes the immanence of the experience, how far it nonetheless demands an adequate object (the work of art) in order to be able to remain immanent can only be considered later. But one must emphasize at this point that the facticity of art can never be abolished by taking such a formulation of the problem as the starting point: that works of art (and a process of creation) exist remains a fact which can never be shown as necessary through the consequences of these assumptions. I am simply pointing out the leap in method which separates the passages written on genius — despite all the subtlety of these particular comments — from the fundamental sections of the “Critique of Judgment.” All that has been said so far already to a certain extent justifies the

raising of our problem, and even if it has not yet been proved that only in this way can a system of aesthetics be constructed that is devoid of inner contradictions (the proof of which will be provided by our contention as a whole), it nevertheless appears that the essence of art can only be understood in this manner. What remains to be demonstrated is only whether thereby the whole of aesthetics is exhaustively covered.

But if we concentrate our entire attention on art, a methodological danger still remains which has to be overcome before we can be in clear possession of the “fact” of art as given in all its clarity, in order to be able to proceed from that point to understanding it. The methodological danger is that art will be understood as the expression of the artist’s will, and its effect as the appropriate conclusion of an adequate process of communication. It is inherent in the “fact” of art that it is called forth by a human will seeking to achieve the work of art, and that the immediacy of its effect originates from “sensuous reception” (*Affiziertsein*), which is the immediacy of effect of the world of experience. If these two types, that is, the creative and the receptive, which are postulated as simultaneous in the existence of the work of art, and the process that extends from the creation and proceeds through the work of art to its enjoyment, are not investigated thoroughly enough, the “fact” of art can never appear in the genuine clarity necessary for further analysis. If, on one hand, the extreme improbability of the immanent perfection of the work owing its existence to a human (that is, frail and imperfect) act of creation and if, on the other hand, the remarkable character of the receptive attitude, that is, that as an experience it should correspond to eternally valid norms while retaining its immediacy, is not investigated, if therefore its inherently paradoxical character does not emerge from the whole of these facts (*Gegebenheitskomplexe*), then the serious methodological danger arises that art will be approximated too closely to the world of experience and its proper essence thereby misunderstood. The danger consequently arises that on one hand the creative process will appear as a simple, even if most intensive, continuation and completion of the process of communication taking place in the world of experience, and on the other that the work will appear as a mere vehicle of expression, which would again abolish the primary fact of its existence, its immanent enclosedness-in-itself (*In-sich-Abgeschlossenheit*). For the essence of art lies in this paradox, in its simultaneous nearness to and distance from the world of experience: if we acknowledge the existence of art we must at the same time clearly perceive the improbability of this existence and must neither approximate it too closely to other spheres of value, which would lead to false identifications and hide its genuine constitutive specificity, nor allow ourselves to postulate an equally disturbing, too close relationship between art and the world of experience, whereby both would be distorted in their most particular essence. Since our task at the moment is to maintain the “fact” of art as unclouded as possible, we must try to analyze it as it arises directly out of the ordinary world of experience, with the improbability that seems to be self-evident, and must — in so far as this is at all possible — assume nothing but the

existence of art and the existence of the world of experience, in order to show their mutual affinity and simultaneous distance.

We are, however, born into the world of experience as into something which cannot be eliminated and which can only be experienced as something self-evident. The ordinary kind of thinking therefore, which runs along clearly indicated lines to its conclusion in this reality unfolding before us in a historically given abundance, but which does not try to grasp reality in its true essence, sees everything that the historically given past of mankind has produced in an atmosphere of natural necessity and immunity from any kind of questioning. For such ordinary kind of thinking, and even more the immediate experience corresponding to it, the mere existence of something removes any real or imaginable problem. Works of art here appear self-evident, innate, friendly, and unquestioned; stimulants of a higher or lower order corresponding to all our moods are apparently to hand in a pleasant and easily accessible *harmonia praestabilita*. And the unbroken and unbreakable stream of a historically experienced continuity flows from works that have not completely achieved perfection, on which our critical acumen is advantageously sharpened, to the completely perfect works of art to which, in silence, our emotions surrender and cling; from our furniture to cathedrals, from trashy stories in newspapers to the *Divine Comedy*. In this continuity the value of the low stages is guaranteed by the indubitable value of the high stages, and their permanent connections provide us with a permanent communion with works of art, even those existing on the highest and most rarified level. From Hamann's mystical pronouncement that poetry is the mother tongue of mankind down to the silliest songs of hikers our whole world of experience is penetrated by an unshakeable faith in the power of art, binding people together, expressing their joys and sorrows, lightening their burdens and redeeming them. And taken in this broad context works of art cease to be isolated: all that the artists are trying to express in their works — adequate media of communication — flows to us in an unbroken and undistorted line and reaches us, and by virtue of these works the world surrounding us loses its often oppressive confusion and tormenting dumbness, and becomes simple, clear-cut, resonant, and self-evident. The great need men feel for communication, which is only a lessened form of their more profound longing for communion and unity with one another, here finds an abiding fulfillment in life and a positive confirmation of it. And this brotherhood of men with all other men, this answer given to the questions he asks by his world, by every man, and the whole of nature, breaks through the limitations imposed on him in space and time; he is freed from his sociological, national, and historical isolation, from his banishment to the world into which he was born, given to him as immediate experience. This human self-evidence of art thereby achieves an exalted meaning which goes far beyond the self-evidence itself: the possibility of the general and complete communicability of all that is human becomes manifested in art and is assured through its existence. As a consequence, however, art itself becomes only one vehicle of this communication

among many others. It is merely the organ through which the human soul predestined to genuine communication, that is, the genius, speaks; but what is important and decisive is the fact that such speech is possible, and the content of what is thus spoken. The work of art is still there, but it slowly disappears in this stream which murmurs from soul to soul; the outlines of its enclosed Being-for-itself (*Für-sich-sein*) increasingly dissolve, until finally nothing is left here but a kind of medium, mediating and obscuring. This is where the decisive aspect of this formation is to be discovered: the movement in which the work of art acts as a vehicle of communication must transcend the work itself; its meaning, which transcends what is agreeable and pleasant in the sphere of mere experience, abolishes the single real warrant of its existence: the work of art.

This is the great danger of defining art on the basis of such an experienced facticity; if art becomes the organ of the desire for unity, it ceases to be art, and is placed in a context which is at once based on it and abolishes it. The splendid but irresponsible flight of the spirit, from this longing for unity to its accomplishment, skips the all-decisive process by which this very longing is purified and made conscious of itself, and thereby loses the clarity necessary for a possible fulfillment. If, therefore, art for Schelling stands at the summit of the philosophical hierarchy “because it opens to him, as it were, the holy of holies, where burns in eternal and original unity, as if in a single flame, that which in nature and history is rent asunder, and in life and action, no less than in thought, must forever fly apart,” then the whole of philosophy and religion, which also strain for fulfillment, must flow into this prescribed goal.³ What was separate earlier, must unite, and the Utopian goal of thought, for which the brilliant completed perfection of art served as guide and signpost, is to be achieved in philosophy itself. But here however, despite the will of the thinker, springing from the immanent logic of this formulation of the question itself, art has abolished itself: all instances of its fulfillment are but small islands in a sea of isolation and in the struggle for unity; if the call to unite, addressed to thought from such islands, is heard, then the great stream in which all the elements are mixed together in final unity has washed away even its weak and temporary dams, and destroyed its existence — its lonely being-for-itself (*Für-sich-Bestehen*). To demonstrate that such a union is possible at all, the — indestructible — specific existence of art is the only indication and the only possible proof.

We must therefore abandon this reality and regard it from a distance, with alien eyes, in order to recognize this longing for union and its fulfillment — of which, to start with, art reveals itself as the noblest and only earthly real form — as naked facts, and to understand their true structure and true relationship to each other. The first consequence to emerge from such a changed standpoint, is that the completeness and adequacy of communication between men is an ingenuously believed but unproved and unprovable assumption. As soon as it goes beyond an attitude toward objects that is either based on real experience or is merely practical, this assumption proves to be

an ingenuous and untenable dogmatism, which, however, as a structural element of the pure world of experience, becomes at the same time its decisive and constitutive “regional” category. For the “reality” of this world consists precisely in the fact that nothing can occur in it that does not for the given moment adopt the character of the “experienced” and “experienceable,” subjective-reflective in character for the object, but solely constitutive for the subject of this reality. The profound difference that separates this domain from all others (from all types of knowledge as well as from the spheres of ethical or religious attitudes, and so on) is that in this sphere no maxims of a normative attitude toward the objects can be demonstrated; that due to the principles governing this sphere, no differences in value or validity between the different “experiences” of the most different people can be proved, that they always remain purely subjective and can never refer unequivocally to a common object which is guaranteed in some manner or other. The real differences between them are of quality and intensity, and the consequent attempt to range the different experiences of different people in order and compare them with one another is only possible by departing from the sphere of pure experience. The absence of limitations and contradictions in this sphere, which is so overwhelming that even “not-experience” can only appear as a form of experience, determines the vacillating and problematic communicability within it. For the essence of the experience can only be defined by the help of its qualitative specificity, in comparison with which every means of expression will be weak, abstract, distorting, and will ignore all that is essential.

This inconsistency between the material and the form of the expression originates from what is here the necessary absence of a normative attitude; every maxim through the acceptance of which homogeneity is achieved in any sphere presupposes a certain constitutive “belonging-together” and organic connection between the material occurring in it and the form that organizes this material. Subjecting oneself to the mastery of the maxim as one enters the sphere in question, one secures an absolute lack of ambiguity and absence of misunderstanding in it. Early Greek skepticism, which denied the unambiguous communicability of knowledge — as for instance in the third proposition of the *Gorgias* — and thereby denied the possibility of knowledge, which it considered to be extremely doubtful if not absolutely valueless, in the final analysis only referred to and was concerned with the world of experience, and not with knowledge. It was only because it was alien to the structure of the Greek spirit to make any strict division between experience and knowledge and to remove the subject and object as instruments of knowledge from the sphere of experience, that the exact description of the structure of the world of experience led to skepticism over the possibility of knowledge. For the difference between the signal and the thing signalled — for example, the word “color” and the image of “color” — only refers to the world of experience: the color which is communicated in the sphere of logic has nothing in common with the experience of the senses, and even less with the differences which are perceived concerning their quality by different individuals.

Through the will to truth, the subordination of the subject to the maxims of logic, a sphere has come into being in which the concept of “color,” as the material of the logical forms, has lost all the qualitative differences of its capacity to be experienced; it was bound to lose them, since the logical subject is postulated simultaneously with the will for logic, and this has no longer anything to do with the qualitative differences originating from the empirical subject.

If, on the other hand, one individual wishes to communicate to another his experience of a certain color, then the discrepancy between the signal and the thing signalled, as recognized by Gorgias, becomes clear: then the signal is something abstract, something transferred, which can never catch precisely what matters, what constitutes the experiential character of the thing experienced; it can never catch its special quality. There can never be any guarantee or control that the man expressing his experience has actually expressed his experience and that his communication has been understood; for if — to take the simplest case — he points out to the other individual the object itself that gave rise to the experience, then the only demonstrable fact is that two individuals experienced something in front of one and the same object and that they could describe their experience in the same words. But words are equally inadequate for the expression of qualities of experience, and it will never be demonstrable whether even in such a case the two have had the same experience or only approximately the same. Unambiguity can only be achieved if the communication of this quality is consciously relinquished and the conceptual vehicle of communication, which is abstract as opposed to qualitative, is willed as such; if an unambiguous and homogeneous sphere, defined by maxims, emerges. Each of these groups of maxims, however (the axioms and postulates of geometry come to mind) contains — viewed from the aspect of its capacity to be experienced — something arbitrary, often even something that appears to be conventional, something that neglects and violates precisely what the experience is concerned with; a reaction which is the exact opposite of the aim of logic, which is the endeavor to keep its assumptions, elements, and connections free from every criterion of experience and from every comparison with it. What is involved in both cases is the necessary self-regulation of these spheres, their involuntary tendency to elaborate everything that appears in them in accordance with their own structure, and to treat everything opposed to them as non-existent (for them). As a consequence, the necessary contradiction between the qualitative non-comparability of pure experience and any sort of conceivable expression — which, if it is to be an expression, already presupposes something in common between the two subjects of the mutual communication — is established and recognized as an essential characteristic of this sphere.

The contradiction within this sphere becomes of course obscured and only very rarely comes to light. But the reasons for this lack of clarity are widely various. On one hand, a whole body of experiences of this reality are connected with ordinary practical activities, for most of which the banal and abstract conceptualization suffices. Since

the experience translated into act is far more important in this connection than the experience itself, the question of whether the act of a subject corresponding in its consequences to the intention of another experiencing subject was indeed motivated by a will to understand what is subjectively essential in the intention cannot and will not be examined here. The consonance between intention and result is quite sufficient here, and only in the event of failure may the problem of “not being understood” arise; and even this will not necessarily happen since there are so many more practical motives available (malevolence, incapacity, et cetera) to explain a failure, and because the subject is too interested in the practical success of his intention to reflect on those reasons for failure beyond the practical sphere. On the other hand, all sorts of elements of realities already assimilated into homogeneity, colorfully mixed and boundlessly diminishing, occur in the world of experience, and normative attitudes such as the aesthetic, the religious, and so on, also demand a certain kind of capacity for being experienced that is apparently situated on the direct line extending from the world of experience. To this must be added every form of hasty intellectualism rushing toward the goal without realizing the difficulties, which regards as essential only what can be expressed conceptually, and only too speedily leaves the sphere of pure quality behind with its problems unsolved, believing it can be treated as a mere negligible quantity. The investigation of this reality is consequently almost always left to psychology, which as a science cannot have any resources to deal with the intrinsic nature of this world, nor needs any for its own purposes, and which cannot grasp our problem of the structure of this sphere at all, since an adequate power of expressing experience is a necessary and fruitful methodological assumption of psychology.

The decisive reason lies however in the essence of the world of experience itself: it is the condition “natural” to man, from which he must violently break away in order to reach one of the homogeneous spheres, for example, that of normative-ethical attitudes, to which he constantly tries to return as if by a kind of law of gravitation of the *creatura*, constantly trying to obliterate the signs of contradiction between this world and all others, in order to make the transitions easier for himself. This is the reason why the locked-in existence (*In-sich-eingesperrt-sein*) of the merely experiencing man only very rarely becomes conscious. The most alluring, enchanting, and artful aids are employed to cover the inadequacy of the content and means of expression. First of all there are the gestures and shades of accentuation which can be used in men’s communication with one another, in conversation for instance, with its varied and unlimited possibilities of minute and delicate differentiation and with its great elasticity and readiness to grasp the essential, the specific in the other individual. But no sensibility to impressions in any way proves that what is concealed behind these impressions, the experience that has brought them about and which they are designed to express, has indeed been understood; however acute and fine the complexity of the system of signals may become, these refinements will never overcome its fundamentally paradoxical character. To this must be added the

theoretically-based opposition of the self-contained, abstract concept to the intuition that completely grasps the otherwise unexpressible quality of the essence. It is, however, constantly forgotten that the emphasis laid on the exclusively constitutive force of intuition is precisely what destroys its communicability; the more the concept is reduced to something abstract, to something alien to the “essence,” the more hopeless it seems even to hint at the “essential,” at the proper content, through those instruments of language related to the concept. But that such intuition, thus condemned to dumbness, is the same in all men — that is, that the same metaphysical essence of the external world is its object, and individuals who are essentially the same in their receptive quality, whose identity is only disguised by the obscuring medium of the abstract means of expression, are its subjects — is something that can be asserted but never proved. Under the instigation of a primitive instinct of self-preservation nothing is consequently left untried in order to conceal this abyss. And practical reality with all its devices, which can only weaken but never abolish the pure appearance of what is experienced, meets this effort: within its feeble intensity everything appears to function faultlessly, and only rarely, in sad periods of great loneliness, man becomes conscious of this discord of the world of experience, and then only subjectively, since it is only “experienced,” not understood. “All these things are different, and the words which we use are different again,” says one of Hofmannsthal’s heroines.

It is not our task here to examine the extent to which this situation may influence ethical or religious behavior; in this context only the following single question is important: whether signs, in the widest and most comprehensive sense of the word, are in any way capable of expressing the quality of the experience. If this question is put clearly, that is, if by expression is understood the perfect unambiguity of the means of expression, its absolute adequacy to material and content, and the just as unquestionable power to check and control whether what was to be communicated has in fact been communicated, then this possibility must be denied the very moment the question is formulated. We are bound to affirm that we have no means of checking it at all, nor are we able to think of a means by the help of which it would be possible to establish whether a relation of similarity or even identity exists or does not exist between two experienced qualities, between the expressed and the received. The paradox of the means of expression, from which this impossibility stems, is as follows: either these means of expression are directed towards unambiguity and the ability to be controlled and checked, in which case they are abstract concepts and inadequate to the purely qualitative content; or they are adequate as qualitatively-nuanced signs and indications designed to express quality, and then it is impossible to establish whether they really communicate what was intended — unequivocally, unmistakably, and without any distortion. The fact that motor reactions appear to harmonize the accord in the moods of different people in certain situations in life cannot be here accepted as an argument, since all possibilities of controlling or verifying it are lacking; every

view that sees as the explanation of adequate communicability the same qualitative substance in these single qualitative subjects of experience — a substance comparable to ordinary experience and experienceable — assumes a metaphysics, which in this sphere can never be proved, since the paradox of content and form is just as valid for it as it is for the non-metaphysical investigation, and cannot be eliminated by simply postulating an integral substance behind the conceptual world. Nor can religious or quasi-religious experiences serve here as proof. The religious attitude of the soul creates a homogeneous sphere with normative, universally valid maxims, just as the ethical, logical, or aesthetic attitude does; it must therefore similarly possess an unambiguous communicability *sui generis* of its proper contents; but how these contents are constituted, what the content and the form of this communication are, can only be determined through the analysis of its specific structure. It is certainly inadmissible to imagine a kind of communication that might possibly be shown as also realized in the pure world of experience.

What we therefore have to find and to grasp as a fact of this structural interconnection is the ineradicable longing for communication, the universal belief that one has really communicated or received what was intended to be communicated, the dawning dismay on occasion that all means of expression are inadequate, and the vehement longing to bridge or to forget the gap which has thus come into being. To this is opposed the previously mentioned paradox of all means of expression in relation to pure quality, and the fact that the sum total of all that has been communicated nonetheless coalesces into a continuity and coherence experienced as self-evident. This fact of communication imposes on us a new concept of form, as the means of expressing the experience. Since the self-evident adequacy and immanent homogeneity of the forms of expression have been shown to be deceptive, we must first adequately clarify the premises of this concept through the separate analysis of expression and impression, in order to recognize its true structure. Considered from the aspect of reception, understanding of the signs, the form of expression proves to be something directed toward the power to evoke. Every communication may evoke in us a certain experience of a purely qualitative, subjectively non-comparable character, which we project into its point of departure — the communicating subject — and re-experience as his experience, since it was produced in us by the form of expression reaching us from without — and by its originator. The more intense this re-experience, the more spontaneous is this process of projection, and — with the sole exception of certain purely practical-emotional counter-effects which cannot be considered here — this intensity is taken by the subject as the criterion of understanding with regard to reception. The form as expression of the experience follows a similar approach, seeking to evoke and intensify; but here the drive to influence the other is of an even more purely emotional character. On one hand the degree of perfection in the communication is achieved by the accompanying feeling that one has really expressed oneself, a feeling which is determined by an experience

of similar intensity to the original experience, combined with the emotional aspect of the dynamics of expression; and on the other it is tested and controlled by the intensity of the reaction expressed in the manifest impression exerted on the recipient. We see in consequence that the essential experience of the ability to communicate and be understood depends on the spontaneity and intensity of the direct effects and counter-effects, which for their part are functions of the evocative force displayed in the forms of the expression. From the direct and never penetrable nature of the sphere of experience, therefore, follows the unavoidable illusion that a strong, rich, and spontaneous impression is the mark and warrant of genuine communication. The continuity of the world of pure experience provides another pragmatic and as far as the direct experience is concerned, even stronger guarantee. Since everything (even the absence of an experience) is still somehow an experience, an unbreakable continuity and solidity is engendered, which on account of its capacity to persist, on account of its functioning, appears to offer guarantees for the unproblematical nature of its basic structure. But this functioning is — like all pragmatic proofs — no real proof; that is, it can only demonstrate that there are structural conditions of the forms of experience in the world of pure experience that determine the practical stability, akin to ordinary experience, of this sphere; but that these forms of experience are based on, or have as their consequence, the communicability of the genuine content and the decisive quality of the experience can never be proved in this way. The subtle and profound Eastern tale of Togrul Bey and his children (from *The Book of the Forty Viziers*) illustrates most effectively what is meant here. At the court of an Oriental ruler, it runs, a Christian prelate asks questions through gestures, which finally only a dervish is able to answer, also through gestures; and they part in the belief that they have mutually understood each other, whereas both gave an entirely different content to their signs. But since the signs corresponded exactly to their mutual expectations, each saw in the gestures of the other (although their intended content was entirely different) the answer to his question. This continuity, resulting from “filling up” every foreign sign with one’s own quality of experience and from projecting the latter as the real ground of continuity into the bearer of the sign, maintains itself by the fluidity of its contents and the volatility of its forms. As long as this continuity is not brutally interrupted, everything that contradicts the expectations of the subject can nevertheless be absorbed because, as the consequence of the new experience, both the expectations of future experiences and the memories of the expectations of past experiences shift their positions toward each other in a more or less smooth transition and adjust to the altered circumstances. Thus the continuity of the world of experience has become possible precisely as a result of the steady flow of its determined and determinable content, and this fluidity is connected with the fact that it is bound to the subjective quality of the direct experience; and the empirical, experiencing subject, as long as this is possible, does not go beyond it. This indeterminate immediacy is his natural life-element as an empirical subject,

and this continuity appears sufficient for his existence: all impressions of a wide and colorful external world can be directly received by him, and the subject's incapacity to experience something outside his own quality of experience is not experienced by him as a state of being locked into the prison of his own individuality. And it has been shown that the more subtle and differentiated this particular quality of his experience is, the less it appears a prison to the individual, the less he feels the need to go beyond the immediacy of pure experience — in a word, solipsism — in order to achieve — mediate — a sphere of communion. But the external reality that presents itself to be experienced repeatedly destroys this continuity, and even the most emphatic will to remain within this continuity is countered by the course of the external world: the continuity can be destroyed with such violence and brutality that the smooth transition from expectations to memories and vice-versa can no longer be maintained, and the experiencing individual becomes aware of the reflective nature of his experiences, finding no object and only and always expressing his own subjectivity, and conscious of the fact that his coherent world is thus disappearing from his sight, and that he is faced with a reality which has become empty and meaningless. The most momentous and most clearly visible break in the continuity of experience is death: it is the main reason why there is no man in existence who never leaves the continuity of world of experience in order to find safety in a world of interconnected, equalized subjects, in a world of “togetherness” and homogeneous forms. Which is why Schopenhauer was able to say: “Death is the real inspiring genius or Musagetes of philosophy.... Indeed, without death there would hardly have been any philosophizing.”⁴

But we are not here concerned so much with the effect of the awareness of his own death on the experiencing subject as with the deaths of the other individuals who intervene through all their qualitative falsifications in the life of the subject in question. In the introductory pages to my essay on Beer-Hofmann (in *Soul and Form*) I have tried to outline the phenomenology of this interruption of the world of experience: the alien character of the other man to us is suddenly revealed in his death,

because the illusion of understanding another person is fed only by the renewed miracles, the anticipated surprises of constant companionship... The sense of belonging together is kept alive only by continuity, and once this is destroyed, even the past disappears; everything one person may know about another is only an expectation, only potentiality, only wish or fear, acquiring reality only as a result of what happens later.... [E]very rupture not only cuts off the future for all eternity, but also destroys the entire past.⁵

This is precisely why death is nothing special or isolated: it only surpasses in intensity and finality “the thousand estrangements and pitfalls that may occur in any conversation between friends.”⁶ For the continuity of the world in the world of experience is only necessary for the experiencing subject, and its warrant lies only in the broad, flexible, qualitatively a priori character of the experiencing subject in so far as the possibilities of experience are concerned. There is no guarantee that the world of the realized experiences is somehow adequate to this subjectivity, while there are very weighty reasons to assume the contrary. Every individual is thus continually constrained to leave the world of experience; when its continuity is broken it appears as a dream, the worlds of togetherness as well as the worlds of true reality. This awakening however, is the abandonment of immediacy (logical thought, ethical action according to maxims, and so on), and immediacy is always felt by the subject to be his proper home.

Art, it seems, is predestined to fill this gap: all the volatility and fluidity of the sphere of mere experience has been left behind by art, which has risen to an objectivity far above men and eras, and the lonely subjects meet and unite in its direct effects. Art seems to be the sphere in which directness of effect is not achieved at the expense of its unambiguity, and as a consequence every fear and anxiety about the individual being imprisoned in his subjectivity seems to be eliminated: it appears to be only an incapacity for expression, an empirical, negotiable obstacle that separates the subjects from each other; the perfect man, the artistic genius bursts these walls asunder and can communicate himself fully and completely. As Goethe put it: “When in their anguish other men fall silent / A god gave me the power to tell my pain.”⁷

That such a desire in relation to art had to arise is understandable, but this insight is no argument that the hope is well founded. For in what does art differ from the other forms of communication of the world of experience — if we take it as a direct act of expression of the process of communication — if not in the essential point, in the unambiguous ability to check and control whether it was indeed the content to be communicated that had really been communicated? Its signs equally are only signs, and are burdened with the same perplexing curse of being signs, and the experience of its effect is — from the aspect of the world of experience — superior to other experiences only in intensity. Otherwise art provides no guarantee in itself that it has truly and without distortion communicated the “essence” of the experience that lies behind it, which it “expresses.” On the contrary, the more direct and the more profound is its effect, the more certain it becomes that precisely in regard to the certain unambiguity of its content art as expression and experience cannot differ from other types of experience: the essential stamp of the really profound effect of art is precisely that in it the experiencing subject finds himself at his most profound, that he experiences everything manifest in the work of art precisely as the manifestation of his most personal being, even if his personality appears to expand into a whole world. It is impossible to produce any evidence, or even a method of

seeking such evidence, to prove that this profound experience is identical in its quality or its content with the experience that engendered the work of art. What persuades the feelings that it is impossible for such a deep and genuine feeling to be irrelevant or even misleading brings the effect of art very close indeed to the process of communication of the world of experience, where the illusion exists that the evocative force of the forms of communication guarantees their capacity for genuine communication. Where this illusion was not recognized as an illusion, owing to the fact that the experiencing subject continued to remain in the sphere of experience and the true vehicle of communication was seen in the evocative force, the effects of art could be considered, almost without any transition, as straight extensions of the natural capacity to receive impressions. This was bound to give rise to views such as those of Hemsterhuis, that beauty is what gives us the greatest number of ideas within the shortest time. But in such a view, in which art was taken as the adequate expression of a common and communicable substance, the work of art itself had to be increasingly bypassed as a mere vehicle for this process of communication, and art degraded to a process of communication between those who create and those who enjoy.

Only if this illusion is recognized as both an illusion and a general and indispensable element in the communication of experiences can we arrive at the possibility of grasping this form conceptually. Once it has been shown that communication giving adequate expression to a content cannot be demonstrated, another guarantee will have to be sought for the irreducible fact and functioning of expression, whatever shape it takes. The form of communication will then be examined more closely and a schema discovered in it which is no more than an abstract and consequently inadequate sign, but is nevertheless a sign for the experience, and which therefore disposes of a certain power to arouse new experiences and evoke the intensity of experience. The essence of this schema is determined by its supremely qualitative and immediate character, by the circumstance that all that is general, abstract, and conceptual in it is only a necessary evil, by the fact that the more concretely it is formed the more capable it is functionally to impress and express. Both the relatively high subjective assurance with which minute and undoubtedly quite unintended details of the manifestation seem the most accurately to describe and reveal a personality (the entire Lermolieff method used to determine the attribution to painters of pictures of dubious authorship is based on this presupposition) and the strong human belief in "togetherness" and in mutual understanding, which springs precisely from these elements and not from the rational or rationalizable elements of the form of communication, indicates this in no ambiguous fashion. Forms of communication that are abstract, deliberate, and open to control are at the same time only adequate for purely practical purposes, that is, for the lowest and weakest functions of the sphere of experience. It is through this that the specific character of this form, the fact that it is clearly reaching for the qualitative, but never succeeding, is recognizable, but the necessary consequence of

this character is a misunderstanding of the content of every expression.

The paradoxical structure of this schema lies in the fact that it satisfies the illusion of the communication of content and simultaneously makes this communication impossible. This specific character of the form is due to the fact that the qualitative a priori nature of the experiencing personality expressing its experience produces its effect as a quality and an intensity, that is, as something completely concrete in the schema, and is consequently capable of transmitting intensity and evoking the quality of the experience. The quality and intensity, however, belong to the person to whom the experience is communicated, by which they become his quality and his intensity, from which the experience of the communicator differs in principle. For, compared to pure experience, every expression is inadequate, a schema, but this schema achieves a quality *sui generis* in every experiencing individual, a quality which is essentially only the projection of the subjectivity of the person who experiences into the “bearers” of his experience; it is the direct *Weltanschauung* of the individual, the coloring, the stamp that the whole of the world he experiences receives from him. The power of this schema to transform the experience proves that we are here dealing with an experience that is a priori: where other persons are concerned, everyone only directly experiences his own possibilities of action, feeling, et cetera, and he can only become aware of a motive that is entirely alien — in quality and possibility — to his own psyche in the event of very high intellectual powers and a low intensity of experience. The breadth and intensity of this schema are naturally completely different in different personalities, but every schema comprises the whole world that can be experienced by the subject in question; nothing can become existent for the subject that is not transformed by the schema. The breadth of his schema (for the experiencing subject) therefore, represents the breadth of the world, and the degree of his intensity represents the limits of the possibility of human experience. So that if a man speaks, for instance, of the deepest and strongest feelings, he means the highest intensity of feelings that he is capable of experiencing; and depth, strength, and so forth, mean the corresponding qualities of experience marked out by his schema. And if the subject encounters experiences that are very alien to his ordinary being, the functioning of his schema nevertheless continues: the “bearers” of these experiences are “equipped” with more remote and hidden possibilities of his own quality of experience, as long as his schema holds good, and the schema will thus be re-experienced directly within the quality determined a priori of the experiencing subject. Men of whom even this direct interpretation is impossible will be experienced by the subject of the world of experience as “pathological,” “morbid,” “obsessed,” et cetera. (It is hardly necessary to emphasize that this meaning of pathological as a synonym for the non-re-experienceable only refers to the directly experiencing subject and has nothing in common with the medico-psychological meaning of this concept.)

The subject’s urge for communication is determined by the same motive, but

this urge necessarily shows itself in a different way: the expressing subject will involuntarily try to express the qualitatively specific character of his experience by means more closely connected with his qualitative a priori experience, the use of gestures, nuances of accent, and so on than through the words that stem from the sphere of the community. This, however, makes for the inexorable necessity of misunderstanding. In the first place, only the quality of the experience can be expressed or suggested by this qualitative means of expression; words, which are always comparatively abstract and inadequate, are nevertheless indispensable to indicate its content. In the second place, these qualitative and “quality-free” elements of expression are mixed in the expression itself into a new unity, in which they cannot be disentangled from one another, and in which the relation of the abstract sign to the quality wrestling for expression will necessarily be different for those who receive and for those who communicate; a word for instance is chosen to denote an experience because this word is full of memories that refer to the speaker’s experiences, while the listener finds the word in question either entirely void of experience or associates his own experiences with it, and as a result the word acquires an entirely different accent from the one intended by the speaker; and since he also cannot disregard the unity of word and accentuation, the interpretation is brought into relation with his own experience. And in the third place, the effect of a qualitative means of expression can never be anything but an impression, an experience (this being also the intention of the speaker); but in so far as the experience of the listener is also concerned, everything that has been said of the experience of the speaker applies to him likewise; he can only experience his own quality of experience. The intensity of the experience can be transmitted, even if it includes the subjective projection of his own quality of experience, and this naturally appears to be a sign that the isolation of the experiencing subject is not quite as complete as has been shown in our analysis. And if we have to emphasize once again that the experience of intensity is also only an experience of one’s own intensity, it nevertheless seems that a certain kind of “togetherness” is here established which indicates that the conditions of the experience in general, or at least part of them, are common to all subjects.

It must not be forgotten, however, that the ability to transfer the intensity is also an evocation and not a communication, that it depends to a limited extent only on the real intensity of the experience and much more on the motor-emotional experience-awakening force of the means of expression, by now almost independent; that these means of expression possess — to a certain extent — the capacity to evoke strongly an intensity only faintly present in the experience, and that if they possess no motor-emotional force they are incapable of indicating, even if the quality itself is distorted, the real intensities of experience. To this must be added the impenetrability of the means of expression: if an intensity takes effect it is almost impossible to decide whether this springs from the experience or is generated by the means of expression; for the experiencing subject the experience that is being communicated and its

communication are inseparably interwoven. This possibility of transmission can therefore only refer to a quite abstract species-community, which is most important for the structure of certain spheres of activity (for example, the laws governing the motor-emotional evocation of intensity for aesthetics), but cannot constitute any real communion of the subjects within the world of pure experience.

This almost completely fluid nature of the means of expression is nevertheless essentially moderated and corrected by the continuity of the world of experience and its subjective equivalent and organ, memory. If the impressions that one subject of this sphere receives from another seem to converge into an intuitively ordered total picture (which may be formulated intellectually as well as expressed emotionally, for instance, through an assured presentiment of how the personality in question might act, feel, et cetera, in a certain situation) then something can be seen in it that appears to eliminate this isolation. Our former analysis of this continuity, however, was perhaps convincing enough to make it clear that a guarantee that one's most personal direct experience could be transmitted was sought in vain in this sphere as well. We have seen how unstable, fleeting, and precarious this convergence really is, however certain it may appear to be to the feelings. And we must add that even through the highest forms of perfection that have been achieved, the only thing that can be demonstrated is that the qualitative a priori of the experience is capable of embracing men as a whole and intricate totalities, of penetrating them with its own quality and intensity, and in this way its own subject is enriched with the interrelated reflections of other subjects. All this, however, can only possess the particular quality of the subject himself. It is not produced by any intuition that breaks through the a priori of the experience and reaches the other being, but can only be a product of the a priori itself: the prison of one's own individuality has expanded into a world — but has nevertheless remained a prison. (This is of course no argument against the possibility of a religious intuition: such an intuition refers to the objects of the religious sphere, and concerns — still on this subject — the "soul" of the individual; but there is no proof, here at least, that this "soul" is identical with the world of experience of the immediately given subject. Even if a religion existed that completely identified the concept of the soul with that of the experiencing subject, it would also only be evidence of the unambiguity of direct communication within, and *sub specie*, religious forms, and would only have their object but not their structure in common with the process of communication of the world of experience.) The paradox in the communication of experiences is that every means of expression develops its own independence and acquires its own laws; insofar as the only possibility of communicating what is immediately given in the experience is the evocative force of the forms of communication, the latter achieve an independent life. They acquire the power of arousing experiences, but do not thereby release the communicating subject from the prison of individuality, because the intensity of his experience only creates its own independent forms, but does not break through his limitations; and for the

recipient, they can only enrich his own world, but can never abolish the fact that it is locked into itself and so never allow qualities which are foreign to it to infiltrate.

This is the profound misery and ineradicable loneliness of men of the world of experience; any approach to something “general” in expression makes expression impossible from the very beginning, and what is really his “own” is given, through the fact of expression, a form independent of and separated from the communicating subject, from his will and essence, a form that possesses its own dialectics, its own independent factors of efficacy and, in addition, an impenetrable immanence. For the cruel and insidious trick of this form is precisely to press the urge for communications toward the greatest intensity in what is purely qualitative, bestowing on the latter the ravishing and alluring power of immediate effect; but the form never allows the effect, the effector, and the effected to achieve a communion and a genuine fulfillment — precisely as a result of the vehicle of the effect, the non-comparable nature of the qualitative — but rather leaves it to languish in the perpetual *chiaroscuro* of the not-quite.

Solipsism is thus — as has been made clear in the preceding analysis — the conceptual formulation of the inner structure of the world of experience, and every logic that grows out of this world or intends to return into it is forced to leave unsolved the logical possibility of solipsism as something irrefutable as well as barren. Solipsism is in Schopenhauer’s words “a small frontier fortress. Admittedly, the fortress is impregnable, but the garrison can never sally forth from it, and therefore we can pass it by and leave it in our rear without danger.”⁸ This shaky position can only be superseded by the power of the conceptual, which has definitively separated itself, relying on its own force and substantiality, from the world of experience. Whether this independent meaning of the concept, as the form of logic and the vehicle of its demonstrable and general determination, has a methodological or metaphysical overtone does not matter here; what is important is neither that the logical general validity should attempt in some way or another to master this heterogeneity of the subjects, nor that a connecting medium for the isolated subjects in the world of experience should be seen in the meta-subjective logical medium of togetherness and unambiguity that has been achieved. For on one hand, this would confuse the two spheres and burden logic with insoluble problems, which by their nature are not part of logic, and on the other, the real structure of the world of experience would be obscured and the homogeneous spheres of activity that are related to experienceability (for example, aesthetics) would be loaded from the outset, through a false concept of experience, with barren and confusing assumptions. However, neither for any normative science nor for the individual man wrestling for clarity (that is, neither phenomenologically nor psychologically) is this sharp and exact division of the world of experience and the normative sphere simply given, and the position of the world of experience, with the temptation of its immediacy and the danger of loneliness, remains an eternal problem for any system.

Whether achieving distance from experience means a — religious-metaphysical — escape into logic and ethics, or whether, once the existence of a logic and ethics entirely independent of the world of experience has been secured, a new approach is made as a foundation for a system of aesthetics or a philosophy of religion, is a detail which need not concern us here. If we nevertheless indicate a few types of solution it is only because we desire to clarify the relationship between aesthetics and the world of experience more effectively.

For Greek rationalism, the urge to escape from the world of experience was so clear and strong at this point that for it the ascent into a genuine communicability, no longer exposed to misunderstanding, was accompanied by the metaphysical overtone of participation in the Good, since it appeared impossible for man, entangled in the isolation of a world directly given to his senses, to save himself without higher help. So in the concept of the Good in which the soul can participate, a new homogeneous, and therefore adequately communicable substance emerged; and the approach to it, the growth of communicability, developed into an ethical-metaphysical hierarchy; in which the more the flickering, uncertain, and deceptive mass of what is experienced, what is non-existent, recedes, the more the isolation and separation of men caused by it ceases, and a genuine communion among them proceeds to flourish. “That is why pure and very good people have a much closer relationship with one another,” wrote Plotinus.

Kant, who clearly recognized the qualitatively non-comparable character of “passive” sensibility and its consequence in the lack of capacity to communicate, and based his logic and ethics on the “activity” and “spontaneity” of the logical and the ethical attitudes, sought a foundation for his aesthetics in the concept of taste (*Geschmack*) as *sensus communis*, a mediation between the worlds of norms and of experiences. The process of the rapid abandonment of everything touched with sensuality, the longing return home of the soul, defiled, and lonely through its defilement, to the unity of the concept, seemed rather frivolous and somewhat acrobatic to thorough, clear-sighted Kant. He investigated whether attitudes which were very like everyday experience existed, which could and had to be “expected of everyone” and which therefore might be assumed and — by their presence — proved that “in all human beings, the subjective conditions of this faculty, as far as the relation of the cognitive powers therein set into action to a cognition in general is concerned, are the same.”⁹ If the question is thus formulated, the necessity for which we shall grasp later from Kant’s system, our problem is once again evaded, even if not so crudely as in the case of Plotinus, and not solved. For what saves Kant from this ambiguity is not the attitude of the experiencing subject, but that of the person judging certain groups of experience; an attitude of logic. When he defines “taste” as what makes “satisfaction in the object... universally communicable, even without the mediation of concepts,” the formulation “without the mediation of concepts” (*ohne Begriff*) only denotes the provisional character, the slow struggle for clarity at this

stage, and not something positive.¹⁰ And its certainty, unambiguity, and therefore its communicability, are guaranteed by its unconscious but strong urge for and urge toward genuine purity, that is logic and ethics, and by its character as a judgment and its postulation of general validity; by its assumptions “being subjective conditions for the possibility of perception as such” which have to be the “same” for all men. The shortest description of the circle that has been covered here is perhaps the following: the general communicability of this attitude, which is indicated by the demand it addresses to everyone, is proved by the form of judgment of the expression and of its necessarily general and unambiguous (but just as necessarily logical) assumptions; and in consequence of the identification of the “attitude” itself with the judgment on this attitude, this universal communicability can be attributed to the attitude itself.

But in this connection we have to ask: can the general validity of what is called the aesthetic judgment have any other basis than the logical one, even if it shows a nuance of its own as a result of the aesthetic material which is to be judged? If this question has to be answered in the negative, which seems to us unavoidable, it becomes clear, first, that the attitude expressing a judgment of taste (*Geschmacksurteil*) is already orientated toward a value; it has left the sphere of experience and has transferred back to this sphere the security which had been gained by leaving it, and has thus generalized the justified sphere of validity beyond reasonable measure; second, that any identification of the experience of taste and the judgment of taste, or even placing them too closely in proximity to each other, is inadmissible; third, it becomes clear that the universal Kantian postulate (“it is expected of everyone”) appears to be more demonstrable only by virtue of an ethical-logical interpretation to which it is not entitled, the longing for the elimination of isolation and the illusion that it is eliminated, which we analyzed earlier, and which we found to mean nothing and to refer to nothing. With Kant also the misunderstanding of the form of expression occurs through not entirely consciously leaving the world of experience, through the intellectualization of its structure. Formulated in these terms our question would sound approximately as follows: does the universal communicability of the judgment of taste offer any guarantee for a uniformity of how it is interpreted, of the experiences on which this judgment is based; that is, for the termination of the misunderstanding that we consider necessary and constitutive? This question cannot as yet even be asked here; and we cannot take the possibilities of communication discovered by Kant into consideration at all in solving our problem.

Kant’s arguments do of course contain the highly important beginnings of a fertile analysis of the structure of the world of experience. In such an analysis the negative overtones of communicability, which we have strongly stressed, remain less negative than in the present inquiry. What the positive, cohesive structural conditions in this sphere are would have to be clarified (for example, the relationship of the qualitative a priori of experiences to the empirical personality, its continuity, and the possibility of their change in connection with memory, et cetera). And, in the first

place, whether there are not certain, even if abstract, common traits in this a priori character constituting the personality that may explain the continuity of the world of experience, et cetera). Not only this problem of ours — how communication is not secured — would have to be solved, but also the question how it is in fact secured.

But we ourselves are interested in something else: we have not analyzed the possibility of expression and understanding in the world of experience as being-in-itself, but in order to establish its relations to the foundation of a system of aesthetics. The place of aesthetics in philosophy and through it the metaphysical role of art in the universe is decisively determined by this relationship: the effect of art in its immediacy appears to be closely related to the receptive experience, and highly illuminating theories of artistic creation can be constructed which see in this relationship nothing more than a purer and more intensive form of communication. But in that case a sphere of value has been attained that stems directly from the world of experience, and is not only supported in its objective and general validity by the created work of art, but also — due to the adequacy of the process of communication in the work of art — possesses in the finally independent vehicle of the perfected communication an organ transcending all subjectivity and capable of grasping directly the meaning of the world (*Weltsinn*). The aesthetics of Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer should be enough to make this metaphysical overestimation of art clear; and in the final analysis the position adopted by Plato and Plotinus towards art is based on a similar viewpoint (which, however, will be discussed in more detail elsewhere).

What concerns us here is no more than that this destroys the consummation and independence of artistic creation, and consequently the autonomy of aesthetics. If aesthetics is to be a science in its own right and not a propaedeutic course for the study of metaphysics or the philosophy of religion, it must take its point of departure from the presupposition, or alternatively seek presuppositions, that make a genuine self-enclosed meaning possible for the ultimate value of aesthetics — the work of art. As long as this is possible, aesthetics must hold fast to all the immanence within its domain. It should only abandon the possibility of its immanence if it should be proved that no other presuppositions can be found except those that only allow the existence of art as a transient part in a dialectic process and not as something finished in itself, and that consequently enable aesthetics to exist, not as something immanent, but merely as a transcendent discipline. All the more as this immanence is enclosed more firmly perhaps in the essence of its ultimate value, the work of art, than in any other central value of other normative spheres; for if the immanence of the work is destroyed its existence as a work is destroyed as well. This would seem a sufficient explanation of the methodological importance of our investigation into the process of communication in the world of experience: if an adequate communication of content is possible in this process, then it is conceivable, or even inevitable, that a gradual hierarchical ascent could be constructed from the direct expression of an experience to the direct recognition of God, in which art is at best a passing stage. But if it is

shown that this process is not capable of any communication or communion, then the organs that seize the “genuine essence” are radically different, and art is placed in the paradoxically systematic position of possessing a normative and general immediacy, an objective super-individual value, which is on one hand necessarily connected with the subjective processes of its realization, but on the other never perfectly attained by them in so far as its essence is concerned. It is the paradoxical and unique place taken by the eternal misunderstanding of the work of art that makes the independence and immanence of aesthetics possible. Through the eternity, universality, and objectivity of its central value it is sharply separated from the world of experience; yet it is through the spontaneity and similarity to everyday experience of the normative effect of the work of art, through the fact of not going beyond the twilight, isolating immediacy of the world of experience, of not resolving its misunderstanding, that any possible approach to other spheres of value is excluded from the very beginning. Art as an “expression” demands a dependent aesthetics transcending its original sphere; the misunderstood and nevertheless effective work of art on the other hand demands an immanent aesthetics. (Whether and to what extent this methodological position of aesthetics is important for a metaphysics of art cannot and should not be examined here.)

Every system of aesthetics that has been created by artists, or by scholars directly interested in the existence of art, has looked in this direction for the solution to the problem. Whether the essence of art was seen in the conditions of the material, as by Semper, or in the “absolute artistic will,” as by Riegl, or in the productive homogenizing force of “artistic activity” as by Fiedler-Hildebrand, these efforts were always based on the instinctive certainty that the autonomy of aesthetics was only possible through a resolute and incisive separation of the work of art from any “expression” however constituted; that in order to understand the existence of the work of art quite particular independent laws had to be attributed to it by those investigating this field. But consciously their only desire was to discard the non-artistic content of the process of reception, the misconception that the emotional fulfillment of the recipient evoked by the content was an understanding of the intentions of the artist; and yet, in another way, they believed in a complete communicability, that is, in that of the artistic will, or perhaps in the specific laws of the material. So that for them (and especially for Fiedler) the process of creation became the absolutely normative factor: the work of art is the realization of the purified artistic will, and the receptive attitude that is close to the world of experience is only false and confusing in its content because it does not correspond to the real intentions of the artist. But this is, on one hand, to misunderstand the essence of receptivity: the longing that guides man to art, the will to rediscover a world perfect in itself, vainly sought in life, is, according to Fiedler, an error, a temporary factor, from which the “correct” attitude, the expert’s eye, the accord with the intentions of the artist, can be developed through the educational means of an aesthetics. As a result, however, art would be reduced

to a kind of studio esoterics. On the other hand, because the process of creation was taken as the most decisive, the only possible point of departure for aesthetics, the single “fact” has been eliminated: for Fiedler the process is the eternal, the work of art only a transitory stage, an objectivation, something fragmentary: “the task of art,” he says, “always remains the same, unsolved and insoluble in its totality, and must always remain the same as long as man exists.”

The old unambiguity is thus restored, but in a reversed sense: something exists that can be communicated, and art is only the vehicle of this “expression”; but the content has become more problematic, less general, less common to all men. The “fact” of art remains given, veiled in obscurity: for although the existence of the work of art postulates the artistic process as a precondition, it is impossible for it to acquire its meaning only from the process and lose its plain factual character through it. If artistic activity is the only and ultimate factor given us to explain this “fact,” nonetheless, it remains just as much something quite simply given, accepted, as it was before: the importance, however, of this “fact,” which must be faced in all its implications lies in the profound need of art felt by men who are not artistic; in the inexplicable existence of art in the systematic and metaphysical meaning of the fact of art; and in the activity that has to find its conclusion in art. If this motive is the only motive it reveals the narrow and overstressed aesthetic character of such theories of the artistic process: the final conclusion must be that there are remarkable men — the artists — structurally different from other people, and through a psychological understanding of these men their production, art, can be understood. But if art only becomes real through being understood — how is one to explain the fact of its historical effect? How is one to understand that one and the same historical cultural spirit embraces the manifestations of a given period, that people feel themselves expressed in the works of art without enquiring into the artistic will and understanding it? Riegl and his school carry the investigation of the artistic will further, but obliterate the difference between the specific artistic will and the *Weltanschauung*, which was correctly recognized by Fiedler, and approach the older theories of adequate communication and expression along other paths. Both views contain the misunderstanding, the necessarily inadequate communication; but they cannot arrive at a clear rejection of art as “expression”: Riegl, because, in a comprehensive interpretation of the philosophy of history and art, he only investigated the total will that finds expression in the works of art (for the philosopher), and not the superstructure and foundation of this system; Fiedler, because he hypostatized the — correctly recognized — principle of artistic creation into the only content of aesthetics, and consequently only saw in the inadequate experience of the recipient a fact that had to be surmounted through education, but not a structural element of aesthetics. In both cases, however, the only fact on which an aesthetics could be constructed lost its certainty; it became a means of an (in itself problematic) communication, and dissolved into a process.

Neither of these important lines of thought, consequently, developed into systems

of aesthetics: Riegl laid a significant foundation for a philosophy of the history of art, Fiedler for a phenomenology of the artist; but both their works, because they were not consciously intended as either of these, contain a certain lack of clarity and certain contradictions. This is the most obvious with Fiedler, who simply reversed the old aesthetics of “expression,” and instead of projecting the receptive experience with its misunderstood contents into the artist in order to enable an adequate stream of communication to develop, turned the technical-artistic will of the creator into the — just as adequately realizable — Ought (*Sollen*) of the recipient. We have already recognized that this Ought contradicts the norms of any possible aesthetics. But that this principle is also unable to explain the work of art — that is, that a paradoxical, inadequate relationship exists not only between the recipient and the work but also between the creative personality and the work — is shown in the methodological consequence needed by Fiedler, namely the renunciation of the work of art as attained existence, and the emphasis on its unattainability. In so doing Fiedler separated the process of creation from the work; as a consequence of his method he was forced to regard the work of art as unrealizable, instead of pointing out the paradox that although it was unattainable in terms of the process of creation, it was realized in fact. It is clear that the heterogeneity of the dynamic movements of expression can as little be eliminated in terms of production as in terms of reception, that a necessary precondition for the concept of the work of art is the heterogeneity of the intentions directed towards the work: the misunderstanding.

Only if this misunderstanding is recognized as the only possible direct form of communication will it become possible to understand the existence of the work without difficulty; it then becomes simply a problem to be solved, and it is no longer incomprehensible how a world comes into being out of the double misunderstanding (of the “expression” and of the “understanding”), a world that is not adequately attained by either of them, but which has a necessary normative relationship to both. For while the man of the world of experience never truly recognizes the true character of his schema of expression, but at the best endures it and seeks to rid it of its fluid character through his indistinct longing, and all other human attitudes destroy the qualitative specificity of the schema of expression for the sake of adequate and unambiguous communicability, replacing it by other, conceptual means, in art it is precisely this essential element of the schema that possesses the unique substance. The special dialectics of this schema and its means of expression, which are independent of will and effect, and which cause the deepest confusion in communications concerned with the adequacy of content, are here completely purified and achieve a self contained homogeneity. The confused “not-quite” of both proximity and separation due to the schema is here translated into the sharply divided duality of the work of art, rising in solitude above life and man’s longing for intimacy with it. It was Leo Popper’s great achievement clearly to have recognized this fundamental fact of art, even if his short life, shot through with illness, prevented him from developing this idea in his own

deeply artistic and distinguished style, and even if it was alien to his personality, more orientated toward the arts than towards a system of philosophy, to construct an aesthetic system from this recognition. But in his clairvoyance he clearly recognized the separate life of the work of art and equally clearly the necessary connection of the two inadequate attitudes, that of the creative personality and that of the recipient, to the work of art. From this viewpoint, all one-sidedness can be surmounted; for Leo Popper the theory of technique and material was the true starting point to a metaphysics of art; for in his opinion the technical will and the laws inherent in the material are meta-subjective “bearers” of the will to the work of art, which is forced to realize itself beyond the willing and devoted subjects, and which takes on substance in the work of art in order to establish an earthly paradise longed for by men, created by men but never attainable through their will and their experience.

Through the recognition of this unique and paradoxical character of the work of art, the concept of its existence has been clarified and reached. We have had to advance to this concept of its existence in order to enable us, from this point, truly to see and to understand its real essence, unconfused with other realms of life.

Notes

1. “World of experience” seems to be the most adequate translation of the German term *Erlebnis-wirklichkeit* [Trans.].
2. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 180.
3. F. W. J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, trans. Peter L. Heath (Richmond: U of Virginia P, 1993) 231.
4. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Vol. 2, trans E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966) 463.
5. György Lukács, *Soul and Form*, eds. John T. Sanders and Katie Terezakis, trans. Anna Bostock (New York: Columbia UP, 2010) 129.
6. Lukács, *Soul* 130.
7. Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, *Selected Poetry of Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe*, ed. and trans. David Luke (New York: Penguin, 2005) 209.
8. Schopenhauer, *The World*, Vol. 1 103.
9. Kant, *Critique* 170.
10. *Critique* 173.