

The four sections of this collection address Cavell's ideas about human finitude as a frustrating condition, supporting Cavell's notion of acknowledgement as a tool for overcoming the impossibility of epistemic knowledge of other individuals. The essays offer interesting connections with other concepts developed in both the literary and linguistic fields, such as John Keats's notion of negative capability and pragmatics linguistics. The volume as a whole will thus be of interest not only to postgraduates and scholars who study philosophy, but also to those interested in Shakespeare, gender, and media studies, as well as researchers in pragmatics linguistics for the volume's important connection with the latter's early stages in the philosophy of ordinary language.

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HEGEL'S AESTHETICS: THE ART OF IDEALISM. By Lydia L. Moland. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. 296 p.

Schopenhauer, the great miserabilist, famously described Hegel as a "clumsy charlatan", and his work as nothing more than "the hollowest, most senseless, thoughtless, and [...] most stupefying verbiage."¹ While Schopenhauer was doubtless being at least a little uncharitable, there is something to be said for the characterisation. Dense and recondite, the thick, barbed brambles of Hegel's prose stymie ready understanding. A typical example, from *Philosophy of Nature*, reads: "A rational consideration of Nature, must consider how Nature is in its own self this process of becoming Spirit, of sublating its otherness [...]"² Lucidity is not among its obvious virtues. And yet, in a corpus that includes sentences like the one quoted, Hegel's *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* offers a welcome reprieve. In stark contrast to most of Hegel's scholarship, *Aesthetics* is brisk, even breezy; both an eminently readable typology of artworks, and an analysis of how art functions within his philosophical programme.

Aesthetics was not published during Hegel's lifetime. Indeed, the only work on aesthetics that was published while Hegel was alive is paragraphs 556 to 563 of his *Encyclopedia of the Natural Sciences*; a relatively slim body of scholarship that is absent the analyses of specific genres or objects that typify what we now think of as Hegelian aesthetics. *Aesthetics*, though, was compiled posthumously by Hegel's student Heinrich Gustav Hotho from a number of source texts, including lecture transcripts and Hegel's own lecture notes (unfortunately now lost). It is due to this uncertain provenance that the breeziness of *Aesthetics* has long struck Hegel scholars as suspicious. As Hegel scholar Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert and her team have argued, there is good reason to think that the clarity and elegance of *Aesthetics* is thanks to some rather heavy-handed editing and interpolations on Hotho's part. Naturally, this poses significant questions regarding the status of *Aesthetics* within Hegel's broader programme.

Lydia Moland's excellent *Hegel's Aesthetics: The Art of Idealism* is, at least in part, a response to these questions. In the first comprehensive English-language exegesis of Hegel's aesthetics for thirty-odd years, Moland has taken on the monumental task of developing an authoritative reading of Hegel's aesthetics, correcting for Hotho's changes. Her efforts have resulted in a rich, hybrid analysis that makes clear what she takes to be

Hegel's intentions in certain domains but also treats Hotho's interpolations with generosity when they are either analytically helpful or confirmed elsewhere in Hegel's philosophical programme. In so doing, this "judicious weighing of all available sources", as she writes (18), allows us to better understand the rarified position that art holds.

Moland's volume is divided into three parts. The first, entitled "Art and the Idea," situates the concept of art as an integral part of Hegel's programme, arguing for the notion that Hegelian aesthetics are fundamentally an "aesthetics of truth" (23). This is because, in Hegel's philosophy, neither the concepts we possess nor the world of objects obtain their character or essence independently; instead, both concept and object are constituted at the point of contact—where the rubber of concept hits the road of object, if you like. Hegel argues that it is in this dialectical process of mutual determination—what Hegel calls the 'Idea'—that we can find a nuanced characterisation of freedom: "a process [...] of transforming and being transformed; it requires working with constraints such as nature, other humans' desire, historical meanings, and social norms" (5). Moland makes clear Hegel's claim that art, along with philosophy and religion, are the necessary institutional structures by which embodied human beings (constituting the realm of Spirit) can reflect upon the Idea, thereby becoming ultimately free and self-determined. However, art is importantly dissimilar from both philosophy and religion. Whereas philosophy is concerned with the rational conceptualisation and articulation of the nature of the Idea, and whereas religion employs metaphors, images, and stories to represent the Idea, art gives sensuous appearance to the Idea (*viz.*, beauty) and thus makes clear to us our capacity for freedom (39). All of which is to say that art is not simply important because it is beautiful. Instead, Moland argues that, for Hegel, art is important because it is a necessary and foundational part of the dialectical process by which the world is made clear to us. "Art," she writes, "reminds us that if we assume colors or sounds are simply in the world waiting to be perceived, we discount our own participation in the existence even of things that seem objectively independent of us." (303). As a consequence, the nature of art is tied indelibly with the Idea, and how the Idea is revealed to us by virtue of our own activities and capacities.

The second part of Moland's volume, entitled "The Particular Forms of Art", is an exegesis of the conceptual taxonomy of art for which Hegel is most famous: the movement from symbolic to classical to romantic art. The difference between the three notions, as glossed by Moland, is as follows: "Symbolic art results when humans have an *inadequate* grasp of the Idea and give it *inadequate* form; classical art results when humans have an *inadequate* grasp of the Idea but give it *adequate* form; romantic art results when humans have an *adequate* grasp of the Idea but give it *inadequate* form" (55-56). In so doing, Moland elaborates how Hegel's conceptual taxonomy is oriented towards assessing art's capacity to properly facilitate our awareness of our own freedom: in the case of symbolic art, for example, an incomplete knowledge of freedom, coupled with an incomplete capacity to express that incomplete knowledge, means that human beings are forced to rely on mere symbols. Classical art, meanwhile, offers exquisite sensuous expression of our freedom, even if it lacks the capacity to properly conceptualise it. And finally, romantic art offers an adequate grasp of the Idea but is unable to properly represent it: the freedom offered is too inward-facing to be adequately sensuously expressed.

Finally, the third (and by far the longest) section, "The System of the Individual Arts", addresses an aspect of the *Aesthetics* that has, Moland claims, been underserved by Hegel scholars (as Moland notes, it is the conceptual taxonomy of Hegelian aesthetics that has

most captured the imaginations of academicians). That aspect is his analysis of individual art forms, including architecture, music, sculpture, painting, and poetry. She makes clear that Hegel is interested not only in how art develops from symbolic to classical to romantic art, but also in the specifics of artistic media: what, for instance, is painterly about painting, or musical about music. This section is also organised according to the aforementioned conceptual taxonomy: beginning with architecture (the most symbolic of arts), moving through painting and poetry (a romantic language of “inner imagination” that is “barely sensuous” as a consequence of its internal orientation [280]), and ending with drama—the highest art, it is claimed, because it “brings together the other art forms, rectifying the limitations of both painting and music by showing, in as clear a sensuous form as possible, the re-emergence of subjectivity in action” (300).

While the three parts of Moland’s volume address three distinct aspects of the *Aesthetics*, there is a common thread that runs throughout, providing the underlying conceptual structure for her analysis. Under what other conditions, she asks, does art *end*? This question, posed by Hegel, remains one of the most stimulating and intractable aspects of the *Aesthetics*—a question for which Moland has a number of answers.

The first end condition for art is triggered when art fails to be poetic. The word ‘poetic’ comes to us via the Greek *poiesis*, describing the process by which a thing is made or created. For something to be poetic, then, it must have undergone some kind of transformation; some process of being made strange. By virtue of occurring within Hegel’s philosophy of mutual determination, this strange-making process occurs when the artist and her materials enter into some kind of productive union, giving sensuous expression to freedom by virtue of being the causal product of that self-same freedom. In so doing, the artist transforms the prosaic (coming from the Latin *prosa*, denoting plain discourse) into something poetic, thereby making the world anew. As Moland writes, “Artists poeticize the prosaic [...] to highlight the spiritual in things we have come to think of as mundane. [...] They give us, in short, a sensuous experience of truth” (51). However, Moland argues, artworks can fail to undergo poetic transformation for a couple of reasons. An artwork could, for instance, be too realistic and thus be insufficiently poetical. Self-determination, Hegel claims, is far better expressed by the free actions of a heroic individual rather than, say, a blow-by-blow account of quotidian, realist drudgery. Similarly, art that is too ornamental, moralising, pedantic, or entertaining fails to be poetic because, in being too much of any of those things, it cannot adequately sensuously express our capacity for freedom (57).

The second end condition for art, Moland argues, is triggered by the transition from classical to romantic art. Classical art, as mentioned earlier, is typified by a combination of an inadequate grasp of the Idea (which is to say, human freedom) with an adequate expression of that Idea. This combination rests on the fact that classical art presents a perfect union of both spiritual and sensuous existence—an existence, Hegel says, that is actually contrary to the true inward-facing nature of Spirit. Although it is undeniably beautiful, classical art is hobbled by its “inability to include an independent subjective viewpoint” (92). Furthermore, the attempt to include this independent subjective viewpoint invariably causes classical art to unravel into romantic art: a taxon that is capable of fully capturing human subjectivity but is without the capacity to properly and sensuously express it. The dialectic, Hegel thinks, can go no further; it has “as it were, played itself out; the particular arts’ developmental potential is conceptually exhausted” (132). Art, in short, has ended. However, Moland is careful to point out that

this does not mean that there is no point in making more art. Instead, she takes Hegel to mean that our task, here at the end of art, is to find new ways to express and enshrine our subjective capacities for freedom; a task that is both conceptually enriching and inexhaustible. Art is, after all, one of the ways in which we reflect upon truth, as Moland writes.

Moland's book is both an excellent summary and exegesis of Hegel's aesthetics. Clearly written, conscientious, and stimulating, it offers a systematic reading of *Aesthetics* while simultaneously redressing some of the lacuna within extant English-language scholarship. I can think of no better resource for English-language scholars interested in Hegel's philosophy of art.

Notes

¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality* (Hackett Publishing, 2019), p. 15.

² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Arnold V. Miller, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Being Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830), Translated from Nicolin and Pöggeler's Edition (1959), and from the Zusätze in Michelet's Text (1847)* (Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 14.

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EPISTEMOLOGY AND LINGUISTICS: BHARTṚHARI, STRUCTURALISM AND POSTSTRUCTURALISM. By Prabha S. Dwivedi. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2019. 192 p.

Prabha Shankar Dwivedi's *Epistemology and Linguistics: Bhartṛhari, Structuralism and Poststructuralism* draws keen attention to the field of comparative linguistics wherein the significant propositions of four great philosophers and language theorists are examined at length. The title of this book clarifies the epistemological position of the study with the focus being the linguistic theories of the Indian grammarian Bhartṛhari and the relationality of these theories to modern Western linguistic theories, especially the propositions and expositions of three leading Western language theorists - Saussure, Derrida and Lacan. The title is significant for the intervention it seeks to make in comparative studies, especially when the texts/theories are seen to emerge from the Eastern and Western traditions. The study of linguistics is epistemologically recognized as largely (sometimes exclusively) a product of Western literary and philosophical inquiry. Comparative studies, therefore, tend to situate themselves around the metanarrative of Western linguistics with the intention of highlighting the resonances of Eastern (Indian) theories in the grand narrative of Western theory. There are numerous examples of books, dissertations, college essays and seminar presentations that attempt to make a case for Indian theoretical paradigms by seeking approval from established Western models through echoes and resonances. In literary studies, linguistics, religious studies, political theories and largely in social sciences, this is a common trend. In this discourse, there are two incidences of epistemological damage that are evident. Firstly, the very attempt to recognize the validity of an Indian theoretical framework is undermined by the methodology of the study itself. Secondly, the contexts of emergence of the theoretical