Self-consciousness in Aesthetic Experience: Why Heidegger's Book on Hegel Can Matter for Literary Criticism

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I have been working on the concept of experience as a focus for literary studies. My positive motive involves an effort to stress how contemplating what unfolds as imagination gives a work presence and confers the power to appreciate fully what authors accomplish. But this positive motive proves inseparable from a negative one- to create suspicious or even hostile attitudes to those who insist that the primary value of imaginative experience is the conveying of some kind of cognition. This insistence on cognitive values can be philosophical, concerning what we can learn about life from our reading. Or it can be socially and historically oriented, focused on the difficulties and complexities of existing under specific economic and cultural traditions.

These cognitive concerns obviously matter to readers. But are they the richest ways to engage imaginative works of art? Can those concerns best focus on what I consider the two inseparable aspects of significant art—its ability to provide contemplative and affective intensities capable of engaging the reader in situations they deem worthy of attention, and its eliciting involvement and admiration for what the writer can achieve by the deployment of technical skills necessary for the establishing of distinctive presence? In one sense readers have to be suspicious of my critique of cognitive ambitions because it is not obvious that my proposed alternative can match the practical value of the forms of knowledge the work can be said to communicate. But I will argue that when we seek knowledge from art we fail to give sufficient attention to the specific qualities of the experience that make it art in the first place. In so doing, we also fail to participate in the intensities and the ambiguities of the work in favor of identifying with discursive frameworks for the aesthetic experience that often offer only warmed-over borrowings from the interests of philosophers and social scientists.[1]

My argument will stress how Heidegger on Hegel develops a concept of "philosophical experience" that helps clarify and extend the two distinctions that have been the basic of my work on art as experience.[2] One is the distinction between experience as verb and as noun. As verb "experience" is pure and constantly shifting. Figures from Montaigne to George Bataille to Rei Terada are right to assert that such experience continually manifests its orientation toward conflict with what consciousness tries to impose upon it. But the noun "experience" suggests that self-consciousness can successfully gather aspects of pure experience track and organize these aspects so that they take on coherence and consequence. I want to claim that literary experience involves the production of nominal states capable of multiple levels of coherence.

The second key concept is the difference between "Experience of" and "experience as." When we think we have an experience of something, we are likely to treat it as a possible instance of some more general category. An experience of a bright light makes us want to locate its source and perhaps explain its origin. But if we treat that bright light as an "experience as" in relation to some condition, we pause to dwell on how it illuminates a scene or enters into contrasts with other features of the scene that distribute light differently. In this second case we are not interested in explanation but in

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the kinds of attention that produce involvement in the particular in ways that foster self-conscious appreciation of how that involvement emerges.

Here Heidegger's book matters because he develops out of Hegel the possibility of a third kind of experience with the capacity to integrate experience of and experience as without losing the distinctive particularities of aesthetic experience. "Philosophical experience" is defined in opposition to "natural consciousness" that is content with practical concerns for categorizing discrete states of being. In contrast, philosophical experience stresses the self-reflexive awareness of the powers to constitute presence for concerns about truth:

> Our thought grasps experience in its full nature –as the beingness of beings in the sense of the absolute subject—only when it comes to light in what way the presentation of phenomenal knowledge is a part of appearance as such (HCE 121).

Appearance as such is the state of presence in which self-consciousness recognizes its own contribution to what appears. By developing this "as such" Heidegger can sharpen his contrast between explanation bound to phenomenal knowledge and the activity of contemplation that enables and dwells in states of full presence. And this link between contemplation and full presence provides a suggestive way of imagining what we might call the experiential after-life of works of art. Contemplation both engages presence and affords a locus for remembering that presence and adapting it to future experiences. On this basis we can develop a coherent model for how thinkers like Hegel and Robert Pippin can claim philosophical significance for particular versions of experience as, without invoking traditional epistemic protocols. They pursue what philosophical experience can do in reconciling the asness of particular aesthetic experiences with the mind's desire to treat these experiences "as" sources of contemplation.

I must issue one proviso before I get into the core of my arguments. As much as I have learned from Heidegger and want to be faithful to his text, I need to separate my use of his arguments as much as possible from his obsession with ontology. Ultimately I am interested in beings rendered by artists rather than studying Being as it emerges in Parousia (e.g. in HCE48-49). This dimension of Heidegger's concerns taken literally seems more a contribution to religious studies than to how contemporary philosophy proceeds. I want to adapt these concerns to talk about aesthetic experience. And I do not want Heidegger's ontology because while he recognizes how knowledge of the Absolute depends on a dialectical logic, his sense of presentness makes him uncomfortable with any continuous historical process. For Heidegger there is one crucial historical moment from which we still suffer the consequences—the break from the pursuit of "truth" as "Aletheia", which Heidegger treats as Being coming out of concealment, to the concerns for truth which Aristotle envisioned as the result of inquiry into the nature of particular beings.

Ironically my distance from Heidegger as a philosopher strikes me as a source of permission for using his version of Hegel to theorize about the arts.[3] For such theorizing the primary need is probably for distinctive models of experience stressing how states of presence can extend into philosophical modes of awareness. Heidegger's treatment of Hegel on philosophical experience foregrounds how in particular situations one can focus on the conditions that frame our making judgments that enable experience to take on shape and significance. And Heidegger's working out of philosophical experience by stressing acts of contemplation, and the qualities of self-consciousness that accompany those acts, helps us articulate the values involved in these states of awareness. And in so doing we find ways of talking about the "content" of art without having to makes cases that honor the epistemic conditions regulating claims for cognition. Because he is dealing with Hegel, his accounts of these experiences also allow us to address the historical and dramatic contexts that elicit appreciation for the achievement of individual works of art. Then Hegel's concern for becoming self-conscious about the frameworks making distinctive experience possible provides an ideal theater for the work on contemplation—both in relation to what becomes present and to what might become present with this awareness in the background.

I

Heidegger bases his book on a fact I did not know. The original title of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* was "Science of the Experience of Consciousness" (HCE 7). In order to elaborate the force of this Hegelian concern for experience Heidegger provides a section by section reading of the "Introduction" to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. These readings establish several contrasts I want to deploy—especially contrasts between natural consciousness and philosophical experience, representation and presentation, and explanation and contemplation.

We have to begin our account by attending more precisely to what is involved in the states of philosophical experience that Heidegger sees at the core of Hegel's Phenomenology. Heidegger typically defines his preferred conceptual schema in terms of contrasts with how philosophy after Aristotle constructs its priorities. In this case, the opposition is between natural consciousness, content with representing the world by statements that seek truth, and philosophical experience that seeks to identify in and identify with the nature of subjectivity required to establish a relation between truth and "Reality." Natural consciousness "will show itself to be only the Concept of knowledge, or unreal knowledge" (HCE 13). In fact, all knowledge qua knowledge is unreal knowledge because it is content with beings or represented situations rather than with the reality that has to be pursued as a state of presence rather than pictures of facts.

In order to achieve this grasp of presence, philosophical experience has to separate itself from natural consciousness in two fundamental ways. Our experience of the world in thought must be grounded in contemplation adequate to full presence rather than explanation, which has to be content to resolve doubts that arise in particular efforts to describe relations among beings. Philosophical experience has always to produce awareness of the Being of such beings—primarily by identifying self-consciously with the resources that make representations possible. True science is not the study of facts but the awareness of what in the mind produces the possibility of fact. So Hegel can assert that "Science is the subject of the system, not its object" (HCE 142). Then Spirit becomes able to examine what truth is. Truth is not exhausted by the adequacy of representation because this adequacy only addresses the natural world. A fact is only an index of "truth," for a full experience of "truth" depends on the mind's recognition of what it brings to the situation and how its vitality establishes a presence for the scene in the mind:

> Once the presentation of the appearance of self-certainty is achieved, the Being of what self-certainty regards as existing and true has arisen from it as the new subject matter—the truth of certainty; and certainty is self-consciousness in its self-knowledge (HCE 154).

II

Now I will isolate three motifs in Heidegger's argument that seem to me crucial for dealing thoroughly with works of art as particular experiences: 1) his claim that the primary goal of philosophical attention is to elaborate states of presence, 2) his stress on contemplation as the vehicle for apprehending how presence gets constituted, and 3) his treatment of what self-consciousness gains access to by virtue of its awareness of how it provides frameworks for achieving these moments of presence.

First, Heidegger's effort to introduce "presence" into Hegelian thinking by the opposition between natural consciousness and philosophical experience provides an especially useful way of casting the limitations of traditional modes of empiricist inquiry, especially when we are dealing with art works. Clarifying those limitations in turn provides a framework in which the discourse of presence clarifies why aesthetic experience matters for the psyche. Natural consciousness deals with appearances and desires to isolate particular aspects of those experiences so that interpretations can be offered and checked. Because they must deal with beings rather than being (or even complete situations), such explanations are always partial and always divisive. In order to foreground the

relevant elements being interpreted and explained, the explanation must leave out all of the details that seem not pertinent: "this" because "not that" becomes the governing concern. There simply are no wholes for traditional philosophical inquiry because to treat wholeness would require entirely separate vocabularies relegated now to religious studies. In contrast, philosophical experience can present the object to the subject in a way that the subject can feel itself as subject: "The nature of the subject is constituted in the mode of self-knowledge" within the act of representing (HCE 34).

Heidegger begins his talk about presence with Hegel's recognizing that Descartes altered Modern philosophy by making it about not the world but about self-consciousness of one's place in the world: "Philosophy contemplates what is present in its presence" (HCE 27). Then Heidegger insists that contemplation (not reason) is the vehicle by which we "regard what is present, in its presence … and strives to regard it only as such" (HCE 27). This introduces strategies very different from Cartesian ones. Cartesian rationalism is like empiricism in the sense that it pursues what turns out to be an empty "here," this time located in the thinking subject. But when Hegel talks about presence, the subject has its place in the emergence of an experience because subjectivity provides backgrounds by which presentness takes on substance: "To be conscious means to be present in the ingathering of what is represented" (HCE 56–57). Then self-consciousness can align with the composing purposiveness within the work as the basic means for participating imaginatively in what establishes the experience as presence. Such purposiveness without purpose can be compared with the work other artists do, but there is no need to talk about totality.[4]

III

Interpretation and explanation cannot be represented as doing the work of ingathering. But contemplation enables this kind of activity, and so allows self-consciousness to see itself as necessary for transforming fact into presence. My second motif then requires unpacking how Heidegger deploys the idea of contemplation and why it can be relevant to poetics, despite its history of usage in religious contexts. We have to begin by recognizing that contemplation for Heidegger involves two aspects of the spirit's activity. One is the work of ingathering. The second is an embodied attentive will mobilized by that ingathering to dwell in the sense of presence that is emerging: "The subjectness of the subject is in such a way that, knowing itself, it fits itself into the completeness of its structure. This self-fitting is the mode of Being in which the subject is" (HCE 148; see also HCE 33). Individual beings find their places in the unconcealedness occurring as an overall condition of awareness.

My contrast between acts of ingathering and acts of explanation is not quite Hegelian because for him the opposition between the two states constitutes a complex dialectical interrelationship. But I will remain with Heidegger here initially because this simple adjustment in vocabulary provided by the idea of contemplation seems to me a crucial addition to how literary criticism might imagine its basic task. The concept of contemplation matters because it refers to the patience to take in the full parameters of an experience. It is that taking in which fosters an intimate connection between self-awareness as a condition of involvement and the qualities of objectness which this mode of dwelling transforms into presentness. And making that intimate connection allows us treat contemplation as sanctioning a view of consciousness that can account for the "as" basic to Heideggerean self-awareness:

> True, consciousness has a general notion of its object as object, and likewise of its knowledge as knowledge. But natural consciousness does not pay attention to this "as," because it accepts as valid only that which is immediately represented, even though it is represented always only with the help of the "as." … In the nature of consciousness this quality is split apart and yet can never part. (HCE 104).

"What is to be measured and the measuring standard are present together" (HCE102). Heidegger shows that only contemplation can establish a position capable of observing how "It is the nature of consciousness that makes measuring possible and yields the measure" (HCE 95).

For Hegel dialectical thinking provides that togetherness. But for Heidegger there has to be a different model of framing which establishes how being and thinking come together. Contemplation fills that bill because it offers both awareness of the complexity of a full experience and adapts self-consciousness to who one becomes as one undergoes philosophical experience. And because contemplation can be ongoing, it cannot be reduced to a mere state of awareness. It typically involves a will to continue, and probably to pursue even more satisfaction for the mind that sees itself in the presence.

In essence contemplation does the work of knowing, but it does not produce propositions. Instead it takes in the experience of presence in a way that focuses on its place in meditating on relationships to other experiences. It becomes responsible for producing an "experience of" that honors the particularity of how an" experience as" takes hold of our attention. And it has the power to extend the presence of the work into reflection on how the works relates to other works and to the culture that generated it. "Contemplation" provides a model for how philosophical experience leads us to see the subject in the object rather than the object as bound to the lens of an observing consciousness standing apart from what it observes. In effect contemplation can explain how Heidegger thinks Hegel can treat consciousness of experience as elaborating both subjective and objective uses of the genitive: consciousness establishes a world and confirms the possibility it being treated objectively. And only "contemplation" could call attention to a very different psychological temporality where hovering self-consciously over particular situations replaces the urgent dismembering of the scene required to pursue knowledge with the elements divided into bits of data: "The subjectness of the subject is in such a way that, knowing itself, it fits itself into the completeness of its structure. This self-fitting is the mode of being in which subjectness is (HCE 142).[5]

Heidegger also stresses how where subject is, there also emerges an activity of willing. The sense of presence can only exist when the subject also affirms its self-awareness of who one becomes by virtue of this contemplative process. Presence becomes complete with the willing that affirms self-consciousness as a satisfaction of spirit (See HCE 148). Phenomenology becomes possible when the mind can be seen as an activity of ingathering that takes in a whole state of Being and treats that being as an object requiring completion in the subject's mind and will.

IV

I think we are ready for an example of contemplation dramatically illustrating the mind at work in contributing to how a specific poem comes to take on presence. In this case I have chosen W.C. Williams "Spring and All" because it so radically emphasizes the purposive activity of the author while articulating what the object becomes within this mode of subjective involvement. Contemplation is required for both reader and poet in order to enable taking the time to let the mind dwell on details and especially on authorial choices that ingather what the poem produces as complex presence correlating subject and object:

By the road to the contagious hospital
under the surge of the blue
mottled clouds driven from the
northeast–a cold wind. Beyond, the
waste of broad, muddy fields
brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen

patches of standing water
the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy
stuff of bushes and small trees

with dead, brown leaves under them
leafless vines—

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish
dazed spring approaches—

They enter the new world naked,
cold, uncertain of all
save that they enter. All about them
the cold, familiar wind—

Now the grass, tomorrow
the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf
One by one objects are defined—
It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of
entrance—Still, the profound change
has come upon them: rooted, they
grip down and begin to awaken[6]

We can begin by asking what "All" can mean in the title. In one sense the word could be simply an addendum inquiring into what might justify this gesture. Or it could be part of an expression dismissing what need not be an object worth observing. In another sense, "all" indicates that just mentioning "spring" would be for a modernist poet a weak pastoral gesture, without a sufficient attention to the self-consciousness that begins with the question how the poet will make good on this supplemental phrase. Perhaps this "all" bids for a level of involvement in the reading which will focus on the totality of spring in relation to how the poem stages its details.

The first set of details seem devoted to giving a sense of presence to how "dazed spring" may approach within a setting still marked as a winter landscape. No verbs are allowed for fourteen lines. Williams presents flat particulars, linked only by adjacency. The poem's first verb in line fifteen is merely the abstract "approaches" that primarily just organizes further adjacency. But the stanza following this verb does change the mode of attention to a delicate humanizing concern for a sense of inner life within the scene: consider the feelings evoked by the first "Now" in the poem—functioning as more verb than adverb. Here there is a change in the level of activity because the poem forces the eye's spatial wandering into the mind's sense of possibility for change. And this sense of possible change generates in turn a series of other verbs that "ingather" the diverse space into an overall "it." Now the poem's own contribution to this sense of quickening is most powerfully present.

In the final eight lines there emerges a sense of the whole in which the adjacent elements all participate. Verbs now dominate in unifying the scene, in part because Williams is careful in this section of the poem to make everything asserted about spring literally happen within what proves a complex set of choices. The most dominant feature of this turn is the power of a second "now" to function as both verb eliciting action and adverb calling attention to the speaking's investment in changing qualities. Then the sense of synthesis is carried by the austere collective state of "stark dignity of entrance." That state develops "It" as the relevant agency here, since there is certainly no human source responsible for the action. Instead, this mode of agency can correlate "now" and "still"—no mean feat, especially since "still" serves as both adjective giving action to the substance and adverb measuring the increasing focus engaged by the observing consciousness. More important, "now" and "still" function as further totalizing atmospheric conditions shared by all the particulars and intensified by the ability of the final two verbs to mobilize that general state by adapting unobtrusive partial personifications. Here personification seems to go outward rather than inward by suggesting actions persons share with natural processes.

Williams is also very careful in his decisions that structure the sequence of verbs when their time finally comes. "Rooted" begins the series with a past participle, a reminder of what allows for life and

what prepares for the ensuing verbs in the present tense. And then the present tense verbs are intricately related: gripping down becomes a precondition for growing up. Two other aspects of tense emerge with the phrase "begin to awaken" because it combines a sense of continuing action with a sense of the timelessness or at least the undefined temporality of the infinitive stressed by Heidegger in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. The state of matter here becomes inseparable from the verbs that transfer energy and bring the activity of nature into ineluctable proximity with the desires of the situated impersonal mind. And the verbs intensify matter's possible interactions with a mind intent on realizing its powers to produce a presence for the process of awakening.

V

I saved until last the core concern of Heidegger's book—the shape of the self-consciousness that philosophical experience produces. In my view this concept is crucial because it shows a way to connect the investments of self-consciousness in aesthetic experience with the capacities that persons develop to deploy concrete memories of these experiences in existential situations remote from aesthetic spheres. We can understand how specific attention to works of art can play dialectically into the analysis of cultural situations. But for Heidegger (and for art in general) philosophical experience also has immediate applications to actual situations that bypass dialectics. Such remembered experience can be devoted entirely to reading one concrete situation in light of the example provided by another experience of presence. So we need for both kinds of cases a persuasive connection between the self-consciousness afforded by specific philosophical experience and the modes of awareness various kinds of example can provide, many of which can function dialectially as contrasts to other ways of engaging experience.

Heidegger begins developing this version of self-consciousness by asserting that even sceptics can recognize states of presence. What they refuse to recognize is the capacities of self-conscious reflection to establish the shapes by which the mind characteristically constitutes such presence. The presentation can escape the fate of being relegated to a mere instance only if our experiencing "is certain of containing within itself the whole history of the formation of consciousness, a process in which natural consciousness can find the truth of all its shapes" (HCE 71). "In presentation both what is to be measured and the measuring standard are present together" (HCE 102): "The presentation of experience is part of the experience and belongs to it because it is the movement by which consciousness recognizes its own reality" (117). So when consciousness and it's object are united it is not the result of "applying one to the other." Rather "the nature of consciousness consists in the cohesion of the two" (HCE 102). "Dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself" reflects on "its knowledge as well as its object" (HCE 113): the concept comes to be in consciousness and consciousness finds itself in the concept" (HCE 115).[7]

For me the crucial question becomes how can we characterize this dynamic model of self-consciousness in a way that best accommodates works of art as well as philosophical claims. Clearly logical forms play a crucial part in how self-consciousness accounts for giving experiences distinctive shapes. There also can be a strong case for our awareness of historical contexts and tensions that frame dialectical judgment. But to stop here is probably to make overt philosophical contexts the sole measure of the frameworks available for recognizing how the sense of presence comes about for our experiences. I want to push the capacities of self-reflection within philosophical experience even further. It seems to me necessary not to ignore Wittgenstein's work on cultural grammar as another framework by which we find the subject in the act of objectification and the objectification as testimony to an act of mind.

Heidegger's gloss of one sentence from Hegel's Phenomenology seems fully to support my extending how self-consciousness can see itself constituting presence:

> In the sentence "But consciousness is for itself its own Concept," the real stress lies on the "is." It means it is consciousness itself that accomplishes its appearance to itself and, at the same time, constitutes the

> stage for the appearance, since the stage is part of its nature. Thus consciousness finds itself in its Concept. (HCE 81)

Works of art can obviously be placed within logical and dialectical frameworks visible to self-consciousness. But for the arts the "truth" of the "measure" matters less than awareness of the variety of forms that constitute a particular as particular. So we need the framework provided by cultural grammar for the appreciating the mind's contribution to the presentness of that particular. The notion of frameworks for experience must be as fluid as it is powerful. And once we secure how cultural grammar stages the presence of the particular, we can shift to placing the result of grammatical investigation in a dialectical context stressing its internal tensions.

VI

All of these frameworks ultimately matter for me because the sense of presence they compose provides ways of stressing how the particularity of the experience can resist the empiricism's commitments to generalization and the explanations generalization affords. With works of art, self-consciousness expands by contemplating relationships among particular encounters rather than seeking the categories afforded by explanations. So bringing Heidegger on self-consciousness to works of art requires asking two more questions about these experiences of presentness. How can a work's resistance to the categories of knowledge provide an alternative interpretive vehicle by which to make comparisons and sharpen judgment? And how can the arts be seen as crucial for theoretically expanding our contemplation of "experience as" so that it has consequences in the actual world? Logical and dialectical forms are fundamentally abstract in the sense that they provide shapes for numerous assertions and judgements. But with works of art, the particular given to contemplation must be the vehicle for generalization. If art is to matter in the actual world, it is Hamlet's speeches and choices, not his instantiating Renaissance melancholy, that have to be shown to be relevant in processing our own experiences of presence.

This general claim can be clarified by turning to the ways that Nelson Goodman, Richard Wollheim, and Robert Pippin have developed the concept of exemplification so as to elaborate a mode of thinking sufficiently powerful to establish an alternative to standard models of explanation for how imaginative work can engage experience beyond the text.[8] But now I will just develop my own version of the work example can perform because that work is closely tied to contemplative processes involving the intricacies of "of" and "as." The stakes are large because the case of exemplification affords the ultimate pay-off for Heidegger's treatment of philosophical experience.

One can draw tight parallels between my generalizations about kinds of experience and the mind's powers to develop two kinds of example. "Example of" seeks to characterize a particular by including it in some general class. Othello's actions when he becomes jealous are in many ways typical of extreme jealousy. And my occasional anger at my wife usually stems from standard expectations born of male privilege. But when we treat a remembered experience in terms of its being "an example as," the process involved is quite different. Here we do not generalize by treating the action as an instance of some more general class. One can of course do that, but one is then willing to surrender the individuality of the experience—a large price to pay in relation to art.[9] Instead we can treat the particular as providing a singular instance that may be generalized only while preserving the work's particularity. I can let myself feel the shame of my own inability to escape my interpellation into my culture. And Othello's specific instance of jealousy can become much more interesting to think about, or even to use as an example, than treating it as just another instance of being trapped in delusion. Concentrating on the play as an instance of jealousy must ignore both Iago's brilliance in bringing it about and Othello's effort to dignify that jealousy by treating his murdering Desdemona as a priestly sacrifice. Acting out of simple jealousy proves an insufficient expression of his situation and what he does with that situation.

Heidegger's work on the concept of contemplation affords the possibility of third way of treating example. "Experience as" in its presentness can become the object of "experience of" while retaining its particularity. The particular work becomes an aspect of possible self-conscious frameworks for our engaging other events. We move from adapting individual features of works to the world so we can elaborate the possibility of deploying our remembered involvement in the way a complete work ingathers its various relationships developed among the particular moments of presence. One might use the concrete example of Othello's overall situation in order to dramatize a crucial tension in the Renaissance between desires for self-ennoblement and skeptical worries that one's efforts at nobility just conceal fears of these efforts being sheer self-protective delusion.

But when we use the work for general cultural purposes we have to be careful to emphasize the way the experience develops. It is not enough to interpret a particular motif or idea for which the text comes to stand—so long as one wants to bring the entire work into the world. Let me take a somewhat extended example of the problem of seeking after knowledge that results in only partially ingathering the experience and limiting its possible value for self-reflection. Robert Pippin's recent Hegelian book *Philosophy by Other Means* does a superb job of showing why we might want to claim knowledge for how certain writers work out complex ideas of self-hood. But occasionally his concern for the experience of certain praiseworthy states of mind somewhat trivializes the author's ambitions in rendering concrete situations.

One telling example occurs when he develops a convincing case for the philosophical value of how Henry James treats Maisie's coming to self-knowledge in his novel *What Maisie Knew.* Pippin is clearly right that Maisie, though still a child, develops a fully adult capacity to judge her situation, work out her best interests, and know how she is changing by virtue of that work. She meets the two basic criteria for self-knowledge in her choice to reject her feckless parents and stay with her dull and drab governess because the governess is responsible and reliable. One criterion is simply the analytic adequacy of her analysis of the problems facing her. The other is the capacity not only to act on the knowledge but when challenged to stand behind what she has determined.

This is certainly right. But I think it is not what James is fundamentally interested in. That interest is in the pathos of her noble clarity which condemns her to a life far inferior to what her intelligence deserves. Here, as often in James, the best conceptual solution defining a character's future life is also in many ways the bleakest available action. Having to settle for the small-minded and prudish world of her caretaker aligns Maisie with Claire de Bellegarde in *The Americans*, Elizabeth Archer in *Portrait of a Lady*, and Morton Densher in *The Wings of the Dove*. It is true that Maisie's processes of reasoning are far more complex that Mme de Bellgarde. But they are less complex than Isabel Archer's and Merton Densher's. In all four cases we have to pay attention to the complex of actions and emotions that make the reader feel involved in the consequences of such decisions. Only then, I think, can the reader claim the kind of knowledge that engages the full particularity of the experience. And only then can one approximate Hegelian analysis of how imaginative works take their place in the dialectical path creating the possibilities and limitations of modern social life. Rightness can be a moral victory, but produce existential tragedy. So the reader's admiration has to become aligned with deep pity and a sense of nobility trapped by almost enviable judgments that are doomed to unhappy consequences. It is not so much what Maisie learns as what her learning costs her that gives her exemplary status for the dilemmas facing bright children in James's England—just as it is not what Antigone does so much as her having to choose between obligations to family and Creon's ideal of justice that earns her a place in Hegel's story.

VII

My second version of the work done by example involves returning to our reading of Williams's "Spring and All." What What model for discussing "knowledge of" can preserve the stylistic ambitions Williams exhibits? And how might we reflect on the cultural tensions that underly how the

poem articulates its situation? We can respond easily to the first question. This poem provides a writerly experience of recognizing the change from winter to spring, with all the romance implications of that figure subdued to a process of awakening. In such an experience we cannot separate the linguistic strategies from the perceptual events the poem promotes. Contemplation has to understand how each stylistic move and the substance it engages depend on each other. Spring depends on what poetry can do to make it present. And poetry depends on its ability to recognize in new ways how spring makes an event of its emerging. Our first role for example then emerges in the process of honoring the capacity of Williams stylistic accomplishments to influence subsequent lyric approaches to spring.

Responding to my second question requires shifting to a cultural theater in order to justify a quasi-Hegelian reflection. This is Ralph Waldo Emerson characterizing the nature of experience:

> Dream delivers us to dream, and there is no end to illusion. Life is a Train of moods like a string of beads, and, as we pass through them, they prove to be many- colored lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus. … We animate what we can, and we see only what we animate. Nature and books belong to the eyes that see them. It depends on the mood of the man … Temperament is the iron wire on which the beads are strung.[10]

Probably the most important cultural feature of Williams's poem is that the first person is nowhere in sight. Several modernist artists and writers realized that the skepticism basic to Emerson's essay derived mainly from his insistence on the priority of temperament. Temperament becomes the only source of judgment. Such belief makes collective consciousness and collective agreement impossible, with the only contrast to this skepticism the possibilities of faith in some sort of religious context for one's observations.

In Williams's poem subjectivity does not create a world so much as participate in its objective realization.[11] Eliot's *Waste Land* is probably a more profound presentation of a poetic alternative to Emerson's values. It links shared seeing to dealing with the unconscious and the plethora of voices that in large part constitute modern reality. But Williams is unique in his so emphatically basing lyrical value on how linguistic effects clearly deriving from shared powers can constitute an experience that simply is embedded in the unfolding of a natural scene. I do not think any dialectical discussion of modern culture can be complete if does not recognize the significant potential of this way of handling experience. Dialectics must ask how such concrete examples become effective indicators of sources of blindness in the dominant attitudes prevailing in cultural life, while also filling out the virtues of the emerging attitude so that their limitations will also emerge. This cannot be done by explanation because the power of art is mostly in the concrete presentations offered for contemplation.

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Notes

[1] There is even a more important stake in treating art as a distinctive mode of experience that here I can only gesture toward. The ultimate value of stressing the artistic construction of experience is that this is the best way to cultivate in society capacities for appreciation and for reflecting on why acts of appreciation can matter for its interests. I was once convinced that "appreciation" was just an exercise in social privilege. But I ignored how appreciation almost has to include orientations toward sympathy and empathy—both with

imaginative situations and with the artist composing that situation. And it can include dimensions of gratitude and acts of will to elaborate where that sympathy and empathy might lead. I am still painfully aware that these psychological dispositions can also be ascribed to social privilege. But the more we see of appreciation as social connection the more we are likely to consider such privilege as something we want to make available to everyone.

My case gets stronger when we realize that it is difficult both to appreciate and resent at the same time. And we certainly do not need more resentment in our interactions with society. Instead we need seeing what in others seem worth acknowledging as valuable. And that occurs in art when our imaginations become involved in situations, characters, and authorial choices that seem to reward our attention. One can also say that appreciation in the arts goes beyond individual acts of attunement to the work because it establishes conditions for social bonding. As members of audiences we are likely to want to share our experience and through discussion refine and deepen it. Max Scheler put this social dimension best when he compared what he called material goods to spiritual ones. At some point the pursuit of material goods will encounter conditions where seeking more goods for the self leads to less goods for others. (And then resentment deepens.) But with the arts, the larger the audience the greater the possibility that the pleasures of some ultimately establish greater involvement for all. Consider the difference between a huge cake and a symphony. (And please ignore the response of a student to my use of this example in the 1970's: "When I am stoned, man, the cake is a symphony."[2])

[2] See for much fuller explanations my book *Literature, Education, Society* (Routledge, 2023).

[3] For Heidegger's love of poetry but resistance to aesthetics see David Nowell Smith, *Sounding Silence: Martin Heidegger at the Limits of Poetics* (Fordham University Press, 2013). This book offers a superb treatment of the ways in which Heidegger's ontology drives him toward poetics even as his dislike of formalism makes him suspicious of work in this field. But Smith does not even put Heidegger's book on Hegel in his bibliography, probably because Heidegger's straightforward contributions to poetics lie elsewhere. See also Gerald Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements: Language, Truth, and Poetry in the Later Writings* (Yale University Press, 1989, and Krzysztof Ziarek, *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event* (Northwestern University Press, 2001).

[4] In my *Literature, Education, Society*, I speak of Kant's purposiveness without purpose as simply the work of doubling by which art realizes particular worlds. But conversations with Dan Blanton have convinced me that for Kant this purposiveness is a property of concrete works of art. I want to stress its obvious psychological implications by attributing this purposiveness to how the author makes visible the processes of construction.

[5] The next sentence in Heidegger's text offers a superb instance of his connecting his ideal of "Parousia" with Hegel's Absolute: "System" is "the coming together of the Absolute that gathers itself into its absoluteness and, by virtue of this gathering, is made constant in its own presence" (HCE 142). However I must admit that Heidegger is sometime aware that contemplation will not produce glimpses of the Hegelian Absolute because thinking for Hegel is closer to the violence or *deinon* idealized in Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

[6] *Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams: vol.* 1, edited by A. Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan (New Directions, 1986); p. 183.

[7] When Heidegger turns to Hegel's Absolute he offers the fullest parallel by which we can align philosophical experience to the arts. See HCE 138.

[8] I elaborate this history of developing the concept of example produced by the arts in my *Reckoning with the Imagination: Wittgenstein and the Aesthetics of Literary Experience* (Cornell University Press, 2015), pp.137-42.

[9] To adapt a statement from Wittgenstein, if one cannot find a specific work in a museum it is not likely one will say this work will do instead.

[10] Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Major Prose*. (Harvard University Press, 2015). p. 229.

[11] Here it seems worth mention that Cézanne's concept of realization is probably the best modernist alternative to artistic ideals of representation, imitation, or expression, certainly when we are speaking of Williams:

> I am able to describe to you again…the obstinacy with which I pursue the realization of that part of nature, which, coming into our line of vision, gives the picture. … We must render the image of what we see, forgetting everything that existed before us. Which, I believe, must permit the artist to give his entire personality, whether great or small.
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> "Letter to Emile Bernard" (Oct 23, 1905) in John Rewald, ed., *Paul Cézanne Letters*, trans. Seymour Hacker (Hacker Art Books, 1985), pp. 251-52.