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Review of *Schelling's Philosophie der Kunst* by Bernhard Barth

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Bernhard Barth. *Schellings Philosophie der Kunst*. Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 1991. Pp. 254. Paper, DM 68.

In the winter of 1802–03 Schelling chose to lecture on the philosophy of art as an introduction to his Identity Philosophy. He repeated it in 1804 when he presented the *Complete System of Philosophy* in lecture form and published *Philosophy and Religion*. Art and religion, if indeed their metaphysical content can be distinguished, form the ideal side of Schelling's version of absolute idealism; it is these cognitive and affective domains, not ethics, politics, or history, which for Schelling indicate the return of spirit from the otherness exhibited in nature's structured hierarchy of forms. They are the 'homeward journey' indicated in the lapidary text: "History is an epic composed in God's mind; it has two main parts, one depicting humankind's departure from its center to the farthest periphery, the other its return. The first is its *Iliad*, the second its *Odyssey*. . . . The ideas or spirits had to fall from their center and particularize themselves in nature, the general sphere of fallenness, so that they could return again to Indifference as particular, and, reconciled to it, subsist in it without destroying it."¹

Bernhard Barth subjects the hundred pages or so of the general or metaphysical part of the *Lectures on Art* to close textual analysis, supplying conceptual and literary/historical background where necessary. He produces a sympathetic rendition of what he calls, in contradistinction to Hegel's pessimistic aesthetic (the "death of art" thesis), Schelling's optimistic theory of art and beauty—one which, as in the Platonic and Neoplatonic metaphysics of old, defends art's capacity to convey ultimate truth.

Barth supplies a thematic subtitle for his study *Divine Imaging and Aesthetic Imagination (Einbildungskraft)*. He argues that Schelling conceives both the content of art and the experience of the artist-producer as a counterimage of the original in-building of opposites which obtains in reason, the Absolute's form or expression. Aesthetics reflexively reconstructs *Indifferenz*, or the identity of opposites. Reflexion, human cognitive activity, mirrors reason; aesthetic imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) mirrors ontological identification of differences (*Ineinsbildung*); art reveals essence. Barth follows the lead of his teacher, Werner Beierwaltes, in pursuing themes of Platonic and Augustinian image metaphysics which are perhaps on the periphery of Schelling's thought in the early Identity Philosophy period.² But this approach does not hinder his recognition and exposition of the concepts central to Identity Philosophy in 1802, reason as "identi-fication" (*Ineinsbildung*) and the nature of its products as Ideas or perfect particulars. *Ineinsbildung* is Schelling's static counterpart of Hegel's dynamic dialectic; it is the rational activity in the Absolute and in the artistic genius (or philosophical knower) which makes truth or systematic grasp of the Absolute possible. Ideas are Schelling's counterpart of Hegel's categories or historical and phenomenological stages. Barth's recognition of the centrality of these concepts makes his study an important contribution to understanding Schelling's Identity

¹ *Philosophie und Religion* (1804), F. W. J. Schellings *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, 14 volumes (Stuttgart/Augsburg: Cotta, 1856–1861), 6:57.

² See Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus* (Frankfurt a. M., 1972), and *Identität und Differenz* (Frankfurt a.M., 1980).

Philosophy; in its metaphysical depth it is comparable to Dieter Jähnig's study of the 1799 *System of Transcendental Idealism*, which also pursues the thematic of art.³

Barth follows the general structure of Schelling's lectures: a metaphysical introduction to the phenomena of art, a consideration of art's absolute content (mythology, the divine shapes of the new Olympian divinities), then a consideration of its 'form', the productive activity of artist ('genius') and critic. The presentation is complicated, not inaccurate though sometimes prosy. Citations from Schelling's lectures did help to clarify for this reader the author's conceptual drift, but is it outdated or undialectical to expect the reverse?

Philosophically, the first section of the study is the most important. It is devoted to a systematic "placement" of art in the whole, a derivation of it from metaphysical first principles; this is what Schelling terms "construction." Barth does a fine job of explaining Identity Philosophy, bringing to bear little-read texts from the period such as *Fernere Darstellungen aus dem System der Philosophie* (1802) and *Aphorismen zur Einleitung in die Naturphilosophie* (1806). But the clarity of the exposition in this most abstract and conceptual section of the book is undercut by the author's tendency to adopt a neutered Hegelian terminology of "mediation" and "reflexion" to express the conceptual workings of Schelling's static Identity Philosophy. Barth makes clear that the result of Hegelian dialectic (self-mediating negativity) is *analogous* to Schelling's nonprocessive and nontemporal self-affirmation of the Absolute (56–57n.), but to this reader it seems both unnecessary and confusing to concoct a hybrid terminology—mediation *sans* negativity, intellectual intuition explained in terms of reflection rather than the reverse—to express the analogy. Schelling and Hegel did share a common philosophy from 1801–1803; they shared a common conceptual vocabulary, including "reflexion," "construction," and "potency." Afterwards, Hegel evolves a dynamic and negative concept of reason's function of intellectual intuition, one which locates it in a this-worldly discursive process of conceptual specification and transcendence. Schelling looks back to the history of philosophy to model his own solution to the paradox of intellectual intuition (the identity of discursiveness and unmediated wholeness) with his frankly metaphysical talk of Ideas and their "fall" into time and history. Hegel achieves a theory that connects empirical and metaphysical frames of discourse, Schelling leaves them disconnected. This is a difference which is hard to ignore.

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Virginia Sapiro. *A Vindication of Political Virtue: The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. Pp. xxviii + 366. Paper, \$16.95.

In this carefully researched book, Virginia Sapiro argues that the history of political philosophy shortchanges Mary Wollstonecraft. The canon consigns Wollstonecraft to

³ See Dieter Jähnig, *Die Kunst in der Philosophie*. Bd. 1: *Schellings Begründung von Natur und Geschichte*. Bd. 2: *Die Wahrheitsfunktion der Kunst* (Pfullingen, 1966/69).