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FOR A NEW AESTHETIC EDUCATION

L'attuale conflitto fra studi letterari e cultural studies va ripensato a partire dalla constatazione del tramonto della coscienza estetica borghese. Ciò non implica tuttavia un abbandono della dimensione letteraria: anche in un'epoca dominata dalla cultura di massa, in cui la Bildung assume nuove caratteristiche, i cultural studies sono chiamati a riconoscere il loro debito nei confronti della critica letteraria. Per chiarire questo punto ci soffermeremo, con l'aiuto di Heidegger e Bourdieu, sulle proprietà attribuite da Kant al giudizio di gusto, ossia sulla natura pubblica e formale della sensibilità estetica.

Literary studies is at once the result and instrument of the aesthetic education. Criticism arises from and elaborates a *Bildung*. When the early Marx advanced his notion that the human senses are socialized senses, he turned straightaway to art to explain: «only music can awaken the musical sense in man and the most beautiful music has *no* sense for the unmusical ear ... Only through the objectively unfolded wealth of human nature can the wealth of subjective human sensitivity – a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form, in short, *senses* capable of human gratification – be either cultivated or created ... The *cultivation* of the five senses is the work of all previous history»¹. From its inception, cultural studies has interrogated two features of this history of the cultivation of the aesthetic senses. In the work of the British founders of cultural studies, like Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and E. P. Thompson, or under the inspiration of Mikhail Bakhtin's study of Rabelais' incorporation of popular culture in the humor and carnivalesque elements of his novel,

¹ Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, ed. Quinton Hoare and trans. Rodney Livingston and Gregory Benton (New York: Vintage, 1975), p. 353.

cultural studies has rethought the relation between polite and popular culture, resituated literature within the social history of literacy, and explored the fate of popular culture in the age of mass culture. Cultural studies has also, especially in the United States, contested the assumption that equated the established tradition of Western art and literature – the so-called canon – with culture as such.

That assumption had long underpinned literary studies in the universities, often becoming the desiccated alibi for a narrow, ethnocentric, and unworldly aesthetic education. At the same time, however, this same assumption was the lived experience of some of the greatest critics of the 20th century. They are the last bourgeois intellectuals – critics like T. W. Adorno, Eric Auerbach, and George Steiner – whose cultural formation was the classical *Bildung* that rooted the Western literary and intellectual tradition in childhood and branched it through the psyche as a virtually unconscious inheritance.

What this unique form of aesthetic education was all about is palpable in Elias Canetti's memoirs. At age five or six he had read a children's version of the classics forty times, knowing them by heart. By the time he was eight he and his newly widowed mother spent their evenings reading aloud Schiller's plays in German and Shakespeare's in English; the intensity of their re-enactments of Shakespeare so frightened his nanny that she quit the household. Canetti describes the root and branch of his *Bildung* in these words:

I don't believe I understood the plays we read together. I certainly absorbed a lot from them, but in my memory [my mother] remained the sole character; it was all one single play that we enacted together. The most dreadful events and conflicts, which she never spared me, were transformed in her words, which began as explanations and turned into radiant ecstasy.

When I read Shakespeare for myself five or six years later, this time in German, everything was new to me; I was amazed at remembering it differently, namely as a single torrent of fire².

The social conditions and cultural context of this sort of upbringing have all but disappeared. But the learning it embodied should not. For me, this is the hidden stakes of the current debate – the culture wars – between cultural studies and literary studies.

² Elias Canetti, *The Tongue Set Free: Remembrance of a European Childhood*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), p. 83.

The loss of the classical *Bildung* is neither to be lamented nor celebrated. Lamentation is the preferred polemical mode of American antagonists of cultural studies, whose books carry titles like *Literature Lost*, *The Rise and Fall of English*, *The Death of Literature*. Celebration is the tone of the polemicists who extol cultural studies, as though the loss of the European bourgeois cultural formation of the early and mid-20th century had been the feat of cultural studies itself.

Cultural studies has indeed arisen on the basis of – indeed, because of – an altogether different cultural formation. Beginning with the generation to which I belong, the critic's *Bildung* most likely originates in mass culture and is then overlaid, via schooling rather than family and class heritage with an education in art, literature, and thought. Cultural studies has not yet reflectively taken account of this new education of the senses, even though it is the wellspring of its own project. Most obviously, or perhaps most unconsciously, the aspiration to understand mass culture is a desire for self-understanding. And yet the wealth of interpretive procedures and critical methods by which this enterprise proceeds come predominantly from 20th-century criticism, and therefore through literature. Still to come from cultural studies is a reflection on the inner dynamic of our own sensibility, with its twin sources of mass culture and a schooling in art and ideas.

The antagonists of cultural studies and self-styled defenders of literature are even more forgetful of the history and traditions of 20th-century criticism. Andrew Delbanco, surveying several of the lamentations on the death of literature, dates the beginning of the end very precisely and identifies the culprit: 1970, Paul de Man. It turns out I was there, a witness and specimen of the birth of the death of literature. For in 1970 I began my graduate studies as a student of Gayatri Spivak after having a few months before heard her teacher, the culprit himself, Paul de Man, deliver two lectures, «Lyric and Modernity» and «Literary History and Literary Modernity». The book in which these essays were soon collected, *Blindness and Insight*, is the object of Delbanco's retrospective polemic.

Let's accept for the moment that Delbanco's dating of the crisis in literary studies, coinciding as luck would have it with the vagaries of my own education, is just right. What exactly did Paul de Man do to literary studies in 1970? As Delbanco quite rightly says, de Man «call[ed] into question even the residual aspiration to positive knowledge that structuralism expressed» when he asserted that «a literary text ... is so dependent on changing interpretation that it is not a phenomenal event that can be granted any form of positive existence, whether as a fact of nature or an act of mind». Moreover, Delbanco adds, after de Man literature

«could [no longer] be understood, on the model of religion, as a body of inspired writings with discernible meanings». No quarrel there either. But in Delbanco's storyline this turn of events put literary studies in a quandary: «what was left for English professors to believe and do? The idea of the rightness and wrongness in any reading ... was», he declares, «rendered incoherent». De Man precipitated this unhappy event when he wrote that «there is no room ... for ... notions of accuracy and identity in the shifting world of interpretation»³.

Have we really been shipwrecked and adrift ever since? I readily admit that de Man's account of «the shifting world of interpretation» made an indelible imprint on my own understanding of modern criticism – more so even than I remembered until Delbanco's remarks prompted me to reread *Blindness and Insight*. An insight it was. De Man did not say that readings are never right or wrong. He said, rather, that you can get a text wrong, but you can't get it right. Interpretation is animated and haunted by the awareness that it cannot disclose *the* meaning of texts and at the same time that there is no meaning except that which texts disclose. «A literary text» he wrote, to finish the quotation that Delbanco truncates, «leads to no transcendental perception, intuition, or knowledge ... but merely solicits an understanding that has to remain immanent because it poses the problem of its intelligibility in its own terms. This area of immanence is necessarily part of all critical discourse. Criticism is a metaphor of the act of reading, and this act is itself inexhaustible»⁴. This argument is, in my view, a part of de Man's appropriation of Heidegger's understanding of art and poetry as a concealing and deconcealing⁵. More to the point here, it is a notion he meticulously worked out in *Blindness and Insight* by foregrounding several moments in the history of 20th-century criticism, from the early Lukács to Georges Poulet and Maurice Blanchot, from the New Critics to Derrida, when the critic, at the very moment he reaches his most illuminating, intelligible grasp of a text, unwittingly betrays the blind-spot of his method.

³ Andrew Delbanco, «The Decline and Fall of Literature», in: *The New York Review of Books*, November 4, 1999, pp. 32-38, esp. p. 31.

⁴ Paul de Man, «The Rhetoric of Blindness», in: *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, Second Edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 107.

⁵ See, for example, Martin Heidegger, «The Origin of the Work of Art», in: *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 54-55.

«Criticism is a metaphor of the act of reading» – that is, criticism stylises the reading of a text, lets the inchoate vapour of reading emerge into an intelligible shape. But the critic then has to live with the terms of that intelligibility, which cannot possibly be identical with the text that occasions it and justifies it. Criticism is inevitably askew from the text, a partial, situated, arrested moment in the history or temporal unfolding-refolding of the text and its readings.

De Man's reflection on modern criticism did not render interpretation incoherent or throw literary studies into hopeless relativism. Quite the contrary, it opened a way to understanding the conflict of interpretations. Conflicting interpretations – when they are strong, not merely wrong – cannot be adjudged by reference to the real meaning of a text, and they cannot be simply synthesized into a better interpretation or wider consensus. The conviction behind a critic's interpretation, along with his or her commitment to a method, deconceals by concealing, conceals by deconcealing the text.

As a result, criticism is a passion and a skepticism. The passion for understanding forever rages against the skepticism toward every understanding. It was not a bad lesson to learn in 1970, and it remains pertinent today. Criticism is at the core of the aesthetic education. The extraordinary richness and variety of modern criticism, beginning, say, with Lukács's *Soul and Form* (1910) and *The Theory of the Novel* (1915), embodies our cultivated sense of language, of symbol and story, of expression and silence. The history of modern criticism is not bequeathed to us as an inheritance, nor as a unified tradition and sensibility; our aesthetic education is, rather, an apprenticeship in a field of conflicting interpretations, convictions, and methods.

Today's self-styled defenders of literature literary studies focus their repudiation of contemporary criticism and scholarship on the very point in de Man's thought which identified the vitality and value of literary studies itself.

The other side in the culture wars is beset by a corollary paradox. The proponents of cultural studies often assert, in their programmatic statements, that cultural studies transcends literature and high culture by relegating literature to the margins of a project whose true aim is to understand mass culture or «culture» as a whole. However, cultural studies itself is a practice of writing by intellectuals whose livelihood depends on reading and writing. Cultural studies *is* literature. And the discourse that it produces requires a highly specialized, often elite level of learning. Cultural studies is thus a part of the so-called «high culture» it rejects. Thus, both sides in the American culture wars have tended to refine their

respective positions to the point of maximum self-misunderstanding. Faced with such a vivid impasse, one is tempted to turn to philosophy for some clarification. What does philosophy have to say that might allow us to rethink the nature and purposes of criticism – be it literary criticism, art criticism, or cultural criticism – and thereby renew the question of the aims and values of the aesthetic education? Let's try going back to Kant, since his *Critique of Judgment* was the first modern effort to furnish the vocation of criticism with a philosophical framework and self-understanding. Specifically, I want to consider the fate of three concepts Kant gave to modern criticism. First, the judgment *this is beautiful*, indeed even the experience of beauty, carries within it, according to Kant, «a claim for the agreement of everyone else»⁶. Second, as regards art, the experience of delight that elicits the judgment of beauty is inseparable from the artwork's form. And, third, aesthetic judgment does not simply apply an existing standard to new artworks, since the experience of beauty is in its essence something unexpected and unprecedented, an idea that Kant captured in saying that aesthetic judgment derives the rule from the example. So: universality, form, unprecedentedness. That is, the universality of judgment, the priority of form, the unprecedentedness of beauty.

From today's vantage point it can seem that this triptych of principles has survived only in the conservative camp of modern critical controversies: T.S. Eliot's classicism versus romanticism, Ortega y Gasset's aristocratic liberalism against the revolt of the masses, formalism against Marxism, modernism against post-modernism, literary studies against cultural studies. But such a picture is extremely misleading. Certainly, Kant's own understanding of the self-understanding of criticism was overturned in the ensuing decades and centuries by diverse developments in society and art itself.

First, as regards the universality of aesthetic judgment. Kant wrote at a moment in history where he could expect that the community of taste that was taking shape within the emergent public sphere of the late 18th century would merely extend itself, holding its shape, as the public itself expanded. That expectation exploded, beginning with the French Revolution which in a stroke extended the horizon of the public to the «people,» that is, in principle all members of society, learned or not, literate or not; down through what Raymond Williams

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J.H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1966), p. 199.

called the «long revolution» of the 19th century in which literacy and learning were extended in convulsions and unevenly to all social classes, whether with intention of enlightening or subordinating the masses; and, finally, to our moment in which, in Gianni Vattimo's ironic formulation, the media and mass culture have achieved Hegel's dream of the Absolute Spirit and given us our actually existing universalism, «the coincidence between Being and a completely transparent self-consciousness»⁷.

Second, as regards the priority of form, Kant understood the «mere delight» produced by the beautiful from within a neoclassical aesthetic that valued artworks for their proportion, decorum, and balance. The neoclassical aesthetic proved transitory and never again dominated modern art and literature, even when it periodically reappeared. The most varied artistic developments after Kant seldom sought proportion and balance in their forms, from Romanticism and the development of the novel to Expressionism and the various avant-gardes and beyond. The overthrow of Kant's particular conception of form is decisively registered in the aesthetic thinking of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Adorno, for whom beauty is never the product of well-formedness but is, rather, the illumination effected by the artwork's inner discordance, its rift (*Riss*), the «friction between the antagonistic moments [it] tr[ies] to hold together»⁸. This post-Kantian sense of form is captured in the refrain of a song by Leonard Cohen:

Forget your perfect offering,
There is a crack, a crack, in everything,
That's how the light gets in.

(«Anthem», *The Future*)

Third, as regards the uniqueness of beauty, Kant could not have foreseen the multiple, contradictory senses of *newness* that would emerge in the 19th and 20th centuries with fashion, technological innovation, avant-gardism, art markets, and *postmodernism*. If the beautiful is unprecedented, and if at the same time it is identified with form, then every successive new form or new style would deserve

⁷ Gianni Vattimo, «The Death and Decline of Art», in: *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, trans. Jon R. Snyder (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 51.

⁸ T.W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann and trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 254.

the judgment *this is beautiful*. Neither of the 20th century's versions of this view – the heroic avant-garde's creative destruction of traditions and conventions nor the art dealer's cynical sales pitch to rich clients craving the «latest» – fits very well with our image of the decorous, balanced, proportioned Kant. By the same token, we have long suspected that the mere novelty of style and technique cannot be what determines whether the work has achieved something unprecedented.

So: Kant's three guiding principles of criticism have unravelled into three perpetually unsettled problematics: first, the universality of judgment is thrown in question by an expanding, differentiated, contoured, contradictory public sphere; second, the priority of form is volatilised by artistic practices and aesthetic ideas which no longer value well-formedness but rather find form in the antagonistic striving of the contradictory materials, intentions, and imperatives within the very process of an artwork's construction; and, third, the unprecedentedness of beauty becomes enigmatic in the overdetermined entanglement of art with fashion, technology, and marketing.

Are we not then still in the grip of the threefold vocation of criticism that Kant first illuminated? Not despite these transformations, but because of them. Criticism is an adventure with universality, form, and unprecedentedness. Now, I want to maintain this view while reaffirming my other two claims, namely, that the conflict of interpretations, the incommensurability of competing aesthetic judgments, is ineluctable in modern criticism, *and* that the language of criticism needs to *reflectively* elaborate the new *Bildung* that shapes our aesthetic senses, contradictorily, at once through mass culture and an education in art, literature, and thought. The dissonance among my three claims is so overt that it should be obvious I am providing the mere sketch of a problematic with no hope of (or interest in) arriving at a programmatic statement.

I have suggested that the vitality of modern criticism lies in the moments of incommensurability between conflicting interpretations, judgments, methods. Among modern aesthetic theorists who have grappled with Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, no two are more starkly irreconcilable than Heidegger and Pierre Bourdieu. For me, Heidegger versus Bourdieu represents a particularly salient problem because their respective projects are original and compelling, and yet there is no synthesis or compromise that might square them with one another.

Bourdieu's originality lies in two inquiries the stakes of which are a reformulation of the relation between publicness and aesthetic judgment: first, the prob-

lematic of «the field of cultural production» and, second, his «vulgar» critique of “pure” critiques».

The field of cultural production is Bourdieu's inquiry into the actual dynamics, rather than the normative concept, of the public sphere. It is at the same time an extraordinary refinement of the sociology of intellectuals, eschewing the attempt to derive cultural and intellectual creations from the social class or class allegiance or ideology of the cultural producers. Instead, he maps the field of cultural production as a relatively autonomous domain in which active conflicts and competitions structure the participants' careers and forms of capital, their styles and audiences, their modes of life, and the very meaning of the domain's autonomy. His focus is the decades of the 19th century, roughly from 1830 until the 1880s, during which any expectation of a unified expanded public sphere had given way to a sharply contoured, conflictual field of different, overlapping, often antagonistic «publics».

What makes for the radical originality of Flaubert, and what confers on his work its incomparable *value*, is that it makes contact, at least negatively, with the totality of the literary universe in which it is inscribed and whose contradictions, difficulties and problems he takes complete responsibility for. It follows that the only chance of truly recapturing the singularity of his creative project and fully accounting for it depends on proceeding exactly inversely to those who are content with chanting the litanies of the Unique⁹. In its detail and complexity, Bourdieu's reading of Flaubert is an extraordinary contribution to literary criticism, and it concludes with the sociologist's affirmation of a kind of nonaesthetic or anti-aesthetic appreciation of Flaubert's aesthetic achievement: Bourdieu puts his sociology of the literary field to the test as a method of literary criticism in his reading of Flaubert in *The Rules of Art*. His most compelling analysis aims to show the genesis of the style Flaubert developed in writing *Madame Bovary* and *L'Éducation sentimentale*. Within the cultural field in Flaubert's formative years the writer faced two polar possibilities: the boulevard theatre, whose bourgeois audiences guaranteed a small number of writers a lucrative income, and bohemia, where the writer could churn out pulp novels at an exhausting pace for very little money or contribute to little magazines for no money. Flaubert refused both careers, and

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 98.

invented a style that incorporated and negated all the various positions within the literary field. His artistic imperative became, in his own formulation, «Write the mediocre well».

Singularity rather than uniqueness: Flaubert's creativity lies in this taking of responsibility for the contradictions of the literary field. In another vocabulary, one could say that Flaubert's writing unfolds as an active differentiation from all the discursive possibilities available to him. Form is woven from the fabric of publicness. But does Bourdieu in fact thereby reveal the genesis and the form and the genesis of the form of Flaubert's novels? It is questionable. Although I am not going to make the case in detail here, it seems to me that Bourdieu gives a powerful account of the social genesis and the social meanings of Flaubert's style, establishing the intimate connections between the writer's career and his aesthetic, but does not thereby *exhaust* the genesis or aesthetic of the novels. He believes that he has done just that, largely because he rejects the notion that there is any specifically aesthetic question that cannot be account for by the sociology of the literary field. Bourdieu arrives at this ambitious claim because of something fundamentally amiss in the criticism he made of Kant in the seminal «Postscript» of his earlier book *Distinction*. There he argues, quite rightly I think, «This pure aesthetic is indeed the rationalization of an ethos: pure pleasure, pleasure purely purified of all sensuous or sensible interest, as remote from concupiscence as it is from conspicuous consumption, is opposed as much to the refined, altruistic enjoyment of the courtier as it is to the crude, animal enjoyment of the people ... Kant's analysis of the judgment of taste finds its real basis in a set of aesthetic principles that are the universalization of the dispositions associated with a particular social and economic condition»¹⁰. Bourdieu then overshoots his mark. Kant's way of separating «mere delight» from all other gratifications, especially physical and sexual gratification, can be rejected, as it is by Nietzsche, Max Weber, Adorno, and Freud, without overturning the category of aesthetic judgment. «Pure pleasure», «pure critique» is ultimately a strawman. Moreover, there is an ambiguity in Kant that can be fruitfully exploited. He gives two determinations to the consciousness «of a certain ennoblement and elevation» in aesthetic experience. The first expresses his particular understanding of sublimation: it is a question of «a

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard Universit Press, 1984), p. 493.

certain ennoblement and elevation *above the mere sensibility to pleasure received through the senses*». The second determination of this ennoblement and elevation concerns the tacit appeal in aesthetic experience to the agreement of everyone else: *«the worth of others is estimated in accordance with a like maxim of their judgement»*. As soon as we see that the second determination of the universality of aesthetic judgment does not require the first, then we are in fact back within the orbit, and the ethos, of Bourdieu's own analysis of the inescapably pluralistic field of cultural production. In Kant, aesthetic judgment is a reaching toward publicness without a guarantee of finding agreement. Criticism is an engagement within the public realm, and the public realm determines the very possibility of a judgment of delight. The question thus becomes: What is the relation between publicness and aesthetic judgment? between publicness and form? Bourdieu leaves a gap between them. Aesthetic theory needs to relate them. In Heidegger this relation has yet another fate. Heidegger rejects the notion that beauty resides in the artwork's form in the sense that one speaks of the «purely formal» aspect of art. «In fine art the art itself is not beautiful, but is called so because it produces the beautiful»¹¹. This thesis at once radicalises Kant's notion that the beautiful in art is unprecedented – the rule of an aesthetic judgment must ever be derived from the example – and liberates aesthetic judgment from the confines of a community of taste. Heidegger makes his assertion the conclusion of his commentary on Van Gogh. The beautiful, as illumination or shining, is «a happening of truth at work»:

Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, is in truth. This entity emerges into the unconcealedness of its being ... If there occurs in the work a disclosure of a particular being, disclosing what and how it is, then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work.

In the work of art the truth of an entity has set itself to work. «To set» means here: to bring to a stand. Some particular entity, a pair of peasant shoes, comes in the work to stand in the light of its being. The being of the being comes into the steadiness of its shining ...

The art work opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e., this deconcealing, i.e., the truth of beings, happens in the work»¹².

Beauty is unprecedented now in the sense that the work produces it as an event. Heidegger thus overcomes both formalism, for which the aesthetic experi-

¹¹ Heidegger, «The Origin of the Work of Art», p. 36.

¹² Ibid., pp. 36, 38.

ence of the painting would lie in its visual arrangement, and representationalism, for which the power of the painting lies in its likeness to the entity it represents. We are thus very far as well from «“pure” critique». However, as Vattimo argues, it is necessary somehow to elaborate the notion that there is «a happening of truth at work» in the artwork while disentangling it from Heidegger’s «too inflated a view of the work of art as an inauguration and foundation of historico-cultural worlds»¹³.

Such a taming of Heidegger requires rotating the emphasis back onto the artwork’s «disclosure of a *particular being*». Unprecedentedness need not be an epochal inauguration. The art criticism of John Berger is exemplary in the concreteness it achieves in just such acts of judgment. For Berger, the value of a painting lies in its power to alter our relation to the visible world, to inaugurate something in the visible. To generalize, artworks let something be seen, heard, told, *for the first time*. The critic’s judgment, as with Heidegger, is implicated in questions of truth not «mere form» but Berger, unlike Heidegger, does not restrict the truth of the entity that sets itself to work in the artwork, does not restrict it to epochal foundations. Heidegger’s inflation of the artwork is paradoxically a restriction; his aesthetic judgment denies the plurality of artworks, evident for example in his disdain for the richest of modern literary forms, the novel, and in his intimation of the essential decisions of our entire epoch from a few lines in Hölderlin and Rilke.

The peculiar poverty in the midst of riches in Heidegger’s criticism suggests not only his distaste for the plurality of modern culture and art but also an overt neglect of *form* in the artwork. However, this neglect of form in his critical practice is not in fact matched by a neglect of it in his aesthetic theory. On the contrary, the problem of form is the question he poses at the very moment in his commentary on Nietzsche’s aesthetic thinking, *The Will to Power as Art*, where he alludes to the project of his own essay *The Origin of the Work of Art* as «an inquiry into art that would begin altogether differently, proceeding» – unlike Nietzsche – «from the work of art»¹⁴.

¹³ Gianni Vattimo, «Art and Oscillation», in: *The Transparent Society*, trans. David Webb (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 53.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume I: The Will to Power as Art*, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 118.

I consider this a second crux in Heidegger's aesthetic thought, which, along with the thesis that the beautiful is not a quality of the artwork itself but what it produces, remains largely unexplored in aesthetics and criticism. At issue is the *createdness* of the artwork, a question the eludes Nietzsche's grasp according to Heidegger because of his onesided preoccupation with the creator's «state of aesthetic behaviour»:

If we ask what the essence of creation is, then on the basis of what has gone before we can answer that it is the rapturous bringing-forth of the beautiful in the work. Only in and through creation is the work realized. But because that is so, the essence of the creation for its part remains dependent upon the essence of the work; therefore it can be grasped only from the Being of the work. Creation creates the work. But the essence of the work is the origin of the essence of creation¹⁵.

Let me once again do some deflating. When the artist's creative state is conceived in a Nietzschean way as rapture or more conventionally as an expressive intention or imitation of reality, what is overlooked is the effect of the artwork itself on the artist's act of creating it. The creation of an artwork is not a matter of the artist realizing an inner state or an intention or of executing a plan on, say, the canvas. The painter indeed has an inner state, intention, plan, as he steps to the canvas. He paints, steps back, looks at what's there on the canvas, steps forward again and paints, steps back, reassesses, wipes off some paint, looks, paints, and so on. Over and over again.

What is happening in this dance between the artist and the artwork? As the painting emerges on the canvas, the shape it is taking begins to dictate to the artist the action he takes. The painter's movements and decisions are themselves a *response* to the emergent, still hidden *inner form* of the work, that is, to the principle of its construction, which will not appear until the effort to master all the materials in play is complete – and produces the illuminating rift that cracks the work

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 115. This problematic is then restated in the opening lines of «The Origin of the Work of Art», p. 17: «Origin here means that from which and by which something is what it is and as it is. What something is, as it is, we call its essence or nature. The origin of something is the source of its nature. On the usual view, the work arises out of and by means of the activity of the artist. But by what and whence is the artist what he is? By the work; for to say that the work does credit to the master means that it is the work that first lets the artist emerge as a master of his art. The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist».

under the stress of its constructive principle itself. At that moment some particular being «comes into the steadiness of its shining».

Why then does Heidegger eschew an attentiveness to form, even as he emphasizes that «the work is the origin of the artist» just as much as «the artist is the origin of the work»? The answer is not, I think, that his philosophical ambitions dispensed with the ordinary preoccupations of the literary or art critic. I think, rather, that the problem comes back to the question of publicness. Heidegger goes on, still delicately demarcating his intention to go beyond Nietzsche, to cite Nietzsche's definition of the artist as the one who «ascribes to no thing a value unless it knows how to become form». Nietzsche explains such becoming-form here in an aside as «giving itself up», «making itself public». Although at first blush these words seem quite strange, they define the essence of form ... [F]orm, *forma*, corresponds to the Greek *morphe*. It is the enclosing limit and boundary, what brings and stations a being into that which it is, so that it stands in itself: its configuration. Whatever stands in this way is what the particular being shows itself to be, its outward appearance, *eidos*, through which and in which it emerges, stations itself there as publicly present, scintillates, and achieves pure radiance¹⁶.

Publicness and form: here Heidegger grasps the intimate relation between publicness and form, reviving the Kantian problematic beyond Kant's own conception of form, but at that very moment eschewing any concrete reflection on form, any methodical elaboration of an artwork's inner form. The reason lies in the fact that Heidegger does not ultimately accept the publicness of art and criticism, whether the public realm be conceived in terms of inauguration and foundation (as it will be by Hannah Arendt) or as a regulative ideal (as in Habermas), or as an empirical dynamic in which all discourse is implicated (as in Bourdieu).

The refusal of the values of publicness – the plurality, contingency, and conflict of judgment – goes hand-in-hand in Heidegger with the neglect of form even as he creates a new theoretical space for form. In Bourdieu the neglect of form goes hand-in-hand with a hyperbolic critique of the aesthetic, the beautiful, and illuminating delight even as he creates a new theoretical space for publicness. In the gap that each of these two aesthetic theorists, in opposing ways, spirals toward and away from lies a genuine problematic for aesthetics and cultural studies.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 118-119. The quotations from Nietzsche are from section 817 of *The Will to Power*.