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Wittgenstein and Hegel on Bodies, Souls and Works of Art

Abstract: As a result of the introduction of the metaphysical distinction between persons and their bodies into the philosophy of art, a form of dualism has taken root in aesthetics—a trend which drives a wedge between the materiality of a work of art and its meaning and artistic features. In this paper, which focuses mainly on paintings, I aim to show that it is possible to develop the fruitful analogy between persons and works of art in a way that avoids dualism. My considerations focus on Wittgenstein’s views on the expressiveness of the human body and Hegel’s conception of the material elements of art. By combining the insights of these two philosophers, we are afforded a glimpse into how we might better appreciate both the significance of the perceptual presence of works of art and the affinity between paintings and gestures: their nature as both wholly bodily and wholly psychic.

The rather common distinction in the philosophy of art between artworks and physical objects is sometimes likened to the categorical distinction between persons and bodies (cf. Margolis 1980; Danto 2012: 294). As enlightening as the introduction of this latter distinction from metaphysics into aesthetics may be, it might also have an undesirable side effect, namely the reproduction, in the domain of art, of an aesthetic version of the dualism usually connected to what is often called the “Cartesian” view of the human being (although Descartes might not have been completely responsible for it). Since, according to this view, the mind and its contents are ontologically separate from the body and its parts, aesthetic dualism separates the material body of the artwork and what might be called, following the analogy with persons, its “soul”: its meaning and its aesthetic and artistic properties (cf. Hagberg 1995: 160–190).¹ For art such as literature, this kind of dualism seems inevitable, as the very distinction between *text* and *work* suggests. In the case of visual art, even though contemporary (strong) non-perceptual art fosters the distinction between “body” and “soul”, this kind

¹ When speaking of aesthetic and artistic properties, I wish to capture a distinction between those properties that (as Stephen Davies puts it) are directly available to perception and announce their significance “through the experience they provide” and those artistically relevant properties that are not immediately perceptible within the work (cf. Davies 2006: 53–55).

of separation might be misleading since it makes it easy to downplay the role of the perceptual presence of works and the relation between the materiality of the art object and its meaning and artistic value. With this said, the fruitful analogy between persons and works of art can nonetheless be pursued in a way that avoids the risk of dualism and safeguards the role of the material elements of art, all the while allowing for deviations, exceptions and borderline cases.

In this paper, I would like to suggest an approach along these lines by combining a cluster of insights by Wittgenstein on persons and the perception of persons with certain ideas from Hegel about art. Although Wittgenstein and Hegel are no doubt extremely distant from one another, there is an affinity between Wittgenstein's view on the mind-body relation and Hegel's conception of the role of the sensible materials of art. To my mind, Hegel offers a sort of artistic counterpart to Wittgenstein's famous remark that "the human body is the best picture of the human soul" (PPF 2009: 25).² Reading Hegel's view in light of Wittgenstein helps us better to account for the intrinsic expressive character of the material "body" of art.

My argument has four parts. In section 1, I offer an outline of aesthetic dualism in light of Arthur Danto's famous gallery of indiscernibles. In order to show how it can be misleading, I very briefly comment on two works from the history of painting, among the many possible examples, in which the "body" seems to play a crucial role. In section 2, I recall observations by Wittgenstein on the expressiveness of the human body, and in particular the human face—observations which I will later (in section 4) position alongside Hegel's suggestion that works of art confront us much like human eyes do. Hegel draws a comparison between eyes and the surface of works, namely their material aspect, in a sense that must be qualified. Section 3 and part of section 4 deal with Hegel's conception of the material element of art.

1 On Aesthetic Dualism: Thought Experiments, Art Practice and Borderline Cases

Cartesian dualism has few defenders as a conception of the human being, yet a kind of aesthetic dualism that recalls Descartes may be at work in conceptions that have no obvious Cartesian heritage. A case in point is offered in Danto's famous thought experiment of a gallery of indiscernible canvases: a series of mon-

² A variation on the same theme is expressed in the following remark: "one might say this: If one sees the behaviour of a living thing, one sees its soul" (PI 2009: 357).

ochrome paintings—all the same shade of red, all the same size—which, while identical at the level of observable properties, differ at the level of meaning and artistic properties (cf. Danto 1981: ch. 1). According to Danto, the experiment shows that artistically relevant properties are only loosely (if at all) related to perception.³ This conclusion can probably be resisted, considering that our experience depends, among other things, on attention, the relevant contrast classes, one's expectations, background information, beliefs, etc. These elements influence our perceptual phenomenology and the intentional content of experience; it is therefore possible that the attribution of artistically relevant properties, while not a *perceptual* attribution, is nevertheless grounded in our perceptual experience (cf. Lamarque 2010: 229–232 and above all Nanay 2015). Danto's red canvases yield different experiences once they are identified as distinct, for example by their title.

Be this as it may, Danto's argument involves a view that is very similar to a form of (not necessarily Cartesian) dualism with regard to persons. Just as on the latter view the features ascribed to persons (such as sensation, sight, consciousness, and so forth) outstrip the features we are justified in ascribing to bodies via perception, on the former view attributes of artworks stretch above and beyond the material attributes ascribed to physical objects. Putting the result of the thought experiment in terms of the analogy between works of art and persons, we might say that the monochrome paintings in this example might well have the same “bodies”, but they nevertheless have different “souls”: they are different works of art. On Danto's view, this is possible because the physical object is called a work of art in virtue of being part of a whole; its relationship to this whole is like the relationship “in which a physical body stands to the whole in virtue of which it is recognized as a person” (Danto 2012: 294). Since, in the case of visual art, the object is all that is seen, it acts, in a sense, as a proxy for the whole. It is not in itself the work, however. The artwork is the physical object “with whatever in the philosophy of art corresponds to the soul in the philosophy of person” (Danto 2012: 294).

Given this parallel, if what the thought experiment shows after all is the irrelevance of the “body” of the work, the sense in which works of art are, as Danto claims, *embodied* meanings remains unclear (cf. Pizzo Russo 2008). As Stefano Velotti observes, the impression is that Danto's red canvases, far from being embodied meanings, are either bodies without souls or souls without bod-

³ It is worth recalling that Danto was mainly concerned with the philosophical definition of art. For him, it was important to show that art is philosophically independent of aesthetics—namely (on his use of the term “aesthetics”), independent of “the way things show themselves, together with the reason for preferring one way of showing itself to another” (Danto 2013: 136).

ies (cf. Velotti 2015: 140–150; cf. also Costello 2007). For Leibniz, however, who theorized about indiscernibles, no soul can exist completely independently of a body. It is indisputable that we ascribe to works of art properties above and beyond those ascribed to the physical objects to which they are connected, in which they are embodied, or with which they are affiliated. But what remains unclear is the sense in which attributes such as expressiveness, symbolism, representation, meaning, and the like stretch above and beyond the material attributes we are justified in ascribing to physical objects via perception. Nor is it clear how we can transcend the (prior or contemporaneous) perception of the physical object, moving beyond it to the work of art.

According to Danto, the corollary to the soul in the philosophy of art is the artist's interpretation of the physical object (cf. Danto 2012: 294). Interpretation, as Garry Hagberg points out, is then invoked as a repository of artistic properties (cf. Hagberg 1995: 164–165, 174–175); conceived of in this way, it is actually akin to a Cartesian soul, applied to a work of art (Hagberg 1995: 178); just as the Cartesian soul is separate from its body, the properties that depend on interpretation are detached from the underlying physical object, as if hovering over it.

As Danto's gallery of indiscernibles makes clear, the aesthetic version of mind-body dualism lurks in the breaking apart of the artwork into theoretically distinguishable components and implies a rigid distinction between perception and interpretation, where the latter is appealed to as a prerequisite for speaking of the object as art. However, we are not committed to these assumptions. Furthermore, even if we attend to the gallery example, what is shown is that there can be non-aesthetic artistic properties—an idea which was presumably close to Danto's heart. In fact, the kind of dualism implied by his view fits with the works of art he mainly deals with and with conceptual art, which has challenged the role of perceptual engagement with art. On the other hand, the history of art offers plenty of cases that support the idea that engagement with the materiality of the art object and its perceptual presence is crucial for understanding its meaning and appreciating its artistic properties and value—no doubt a point with which Danto, in spite of his red canvases, would have agreed. In section 1.1, I will sketch two telling examples that focus on the role of colour in paintings.

1.1 Body Matters

It is well known that works like *Valley Farm* (1835) express John Constable's love of the Stour valley and the English countryside more generally. Constable conceived of painting as synonymous with feeling and as a means of representing

and developing his original interest in the places he associated with his cheerful childhood. As Ernst Gombrich has shown, he drew on the Dutch landscape tradition in order to better express those aspects of the countryside that were dear to him. This, among other things, meant making “willows, old rotten planks, slimy posts, and brickwork” visually interesting (cf. Gombrich 1960: 324 and Robinson 2007: 25, 32), an aim which Constable was able to realize thanks to the development of a colour technique that allowed him to achieve certain light effects (cf. Leslie 1896: 298 and 307, qtd. in Gombrich 1960) and to represent tactile and visual qualities of elements of the countryside that attracted him. Making “willows, old rotten planks, slimy posts, and brickwork” visually interesting was Constable’s way of expressing his loving attention to them—of transfiguring the representation of a piece of the world into a means of (self-)expression. It is difficult to see how one can understand Constable’s works without experiencing their “material” qualities.

A perhaps more compelling example is the work of another miller’s son, Rembrandt. Svetlana Alpers has drawn attention to how Rembrandt’s use of colour, particularly in his mature works, creates the peculiar character of his paintings: the way they present themselves as new, independent objects in the world. Rembrandt applies colours to the canvas in a way that makes their material character an object of representation, and thus, Alpers argues, he invites the beholder to *see* qualities that are typically observed only via touch: the weight and the pressure, the substantiality of things. His paintings have a particular perceptual presence, but the way we are invited to perceive them by the use of colour is also relevant to our understanding of them. As Alpers notes, this use allows us to grasp Rembrandt’s emphasis on the role of touch in our experience of the world: his belief that touch stands alongside sight as an essential vehicle of understanding (cf. Alpers 1988: ch. 1).⁴

With regards to the impression that Rembrandt’s paintings confront us as new and independent objects in the world, Alpers quotes an intriguing observation by Philip Guston, a key member of the canon of abstract expressionism. In Rembrandt, Guston writes, “the plane of art is removed. It is not a painting, but a real person—a substitute, a golem” (Alpers 1988: ch. 1, n. 19). This “person effect” is something that Guston himself seems also to have as an aim; when it comes to

⁴ As Alpers shows, the full significance of this belief can be appreciated in connection with subjects in which the representation of hands plays a crucial role. A case in point is the moving *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (ca. 1668). In Rembrandt’s rendering, the father’s eyes seem to be sightless, and what connects father and son in the act of forgiveness are the father’s hands, laid on the shoulders of the penitent son. Touch is represented as an expression of sight, a kind of seeing through the hands, or a means of comprehension.

his own paintings, he expresses his faith “that it is possible to make a living thing, not a diagram of what” he has “been thinking”. That Rembrandt could achieve this effect is presumably why Guston says that he “is really the only painter in the world” (Guston 2011: 54). Painting, in Guston’s view, does not make a duplicate of the world; rather, it makes a world that, while *parallel* to the real world, is different from it (cf. Guston 2011: 266).

Guston’s fascinating remark is complex and should be read in light of his conception of a painting as a being, a touchable thing (cf. Guston 2011: 266). Obviously, a painting cannot be a real person given that it is not a living being and does not have a mental life; it is not by chance that Guston adds “a substitute, a golem”, with regard to which he comments: “only God can make life. A golem was like Dr. Frankenstein” (Guston 2011: 266). In speaking of a real person, he is perhaps saying (in a strong way) that paintings have expressive qualities that are internal to their bodily surfaces—just as the mental life of persons manifests, we might add, in and through their bodies. As we will now see, this is precisely the point to which Wittgenstein draws attention when he reflects on the relationship between body and soul. I shall trace a cluster of his remarks on this issue before returning, via Hegel, to the theme of painting.

2 Changing the Picture: Wittgenstein on Mind and Body

As we have seen, the parallel between artworks and persons suggested by Danto evokes a more or less explicit dualistic or Cartesian view. With regards to persons, the basic idea of this view is that while both personal and material attributes can be properly ascribed to them, only the latter can be properly ascribed to (their) bodies. This implies that there is nothing specifically mental about bodies—that bodies are without intrinsic psychological significance. So conceived, the body is simply a mass of flesh and bone, the physical body of physiology from which mindedness is stripped away. When mindedness is removed from our conception of what we perceive when we look at another person, however, any basis “for attributing mental states to her” is lost (Witherspoon 2011: 491), and we face the puzzling question of how it is that we transcend what a body intrinsically allows, moving up to the level of personal attributes.

It is interesting that Wittgenstein considers the possibility of seeing a human being for what she is *physically* (that is, a cluster of material attributes) to be meaningless (cf. PI 2009: 420 and Hagberg 2008: 77–88 for comment): a consequence of a picture of the human being that, to his mind, is deeply flawed. Our

attitude towards human beings in ordinary circumstances, he claims, is at base “an attitude towards a soul” (PPF 2009: 22). For Wittgenstein, it is inconceivable that a human being might be soulless: “I react immediately to someone else’s behaviour. I presuppose the *inner* insofar as I presuppose a *human being*” (LW 1992: 84). According to him, this is something of a conceptual fact, as is suggested by his assertion that “only of a living human being and what resembles (behaves like) a living human being can one say: it has sensations; it sees; is blind; hears; is deaf; is conscious or unconscious” (PI 2009: 281). “It’s always presupposed”, Wittgenstein observes, “that the one who smiles is a human being and not just that what smiles is a human body” (LW 1992: 84. I owe this quote to Rhie 2011: 16).

Although Wittgenstein also provides reasons to refute the Cartesian picture, he tries above all to make us think about why we are so tempted by it and to highlight that the concept of a human being is the backdrop against which all our talk of thought and emotion, expression, suppression, and the like takes place (cf. Shiner 1982: 255). It is the primary category in our understanding of ourselves and others: we immediately recognize the living presence of human beings and apprehend them as minded creatures. The idea of ascribing “person attributes” to a perceived body, above and beyond the material attributes we ascribe to it, is as odd as ascribing sentience to an abstract entity (cf. PI 2009: 284). It is simply out of place because, unlike living beings, bodies in and of themselves are not animate, sentient, conscious, and so forth. In Wittgenstein’s eyes, the transition from body to living being is like “the transition ‘from quantity to quality’” (PI 2009: 284), namely a change of a fundamental order.

On many occasions, Wittgenstein points out that when we encounter other human beings, we normally take in their states of mind. “We see emotion (*Gemütsbewegung*)”, he writes,

[w]e do not see facial contortions and make inferences from them (like a doctor framing a diagnosis) to joy, grief, boredom. We describe a face immediately as sad, radiant, bored, even when we are unable to give any other description to the feature.—Grief, one would like to say, is personified in the face. (Z 1981: 225)

Description of facial expressions, he observes, “does not consist in giving the measurement of the face” (PI 2009: 285), and recognition of facial expressions does not presuppose a detailed description of the material state of the face. If such a description were relevant to our recognition of facial expressions, its absence would indeed be odd. That it does not enter into recognition of or response to facial expressions shows that we do not infer psychological meaning from purely spatial information (cf. Rhie 2011 on this). In other words, we do not

treat human beings as bodies that exhibit evidence from which to infer inner states or a soul. Person perception is not body perception plus an interpretation of bodily movements.

What is the significance of these observations, for example, with regard to Guston's aspiration of making a painting a living thing? And are Wittgenstein's insights transferable to the domain of art? It is interesting that the philosopher himself recognizes the possibility that other things besides the human body might possess faces or face-like qualities, i.e. are directly expressive. Among them he mentions pieces of music (cf. CV 1980: 22e). This leaves us room to speculate that, just as we do not infer emotions from bodily movements but rather *see* emotions in them, so we confront artworks as, in a sense, intrinsically "ensouled": we *see* (or *hear*) meaning and aesthetic and artistic properties in the "body", thus avoiding the rigid distinction between perception of the physical object and its interpretation. While aesthetic dualism invokes interpretation as a prerequisite for speaking of the object as art, Wittgenstein's observations on our perception of the human body, when transposed to the domain of (visual) art, suggest that we ought to consider the material surface of artworks as intrinsically expressive. To corroborate this view, I will now turn to ideas from Hegel, beginning with a metaphor that would seem to support this idea.

3 Hegel on the "Body" of Art

In his Berlin lectures on art, Hegel draws on the ancient *topos* of the eye as a mirror of the soul, as the organ "in which the soul as such appears, [...] in which spirit is visibly concentrated"; the soul, he claims, "not only sees by the eye but also becomes seen in the eye". This assumption explains a rather strong claim about artistic creation: "We can say about art that what appears at all points on the surface has to rise up to the eye, the seat of the soul, which allows for the appearance of spirit". Art, Hegel maintains, "gives to the object a thousand eyes, in order" for its soul, or "what is spiritual [...] to be seen everywhere in it. [...] The appearance is manifold; art makes appearance into the sort of thing that everywhere in it would be the organ of the soul, its manifestation" (LPA: 247).⁵

⁵ In Hotho's 1835 edition of the lectures, this latter point is formulated as follows: "it is not only the bodily form, the look of the eyes, the countenance and posture, but also actions and events, speech and tones of voice, and the series of their course through all conditions of appearance that art has everywhere to make into an eye, in which the free soul is revealed in its inner infinity" (LA: 154).

Hegel seems to apply the distinction between inner soul and outer appearance precisely in order to emphasize the manifestative capacity of art with regard to what he considers its soul, namely the spiritual, which he also refers to as “the truth of the existent being” (LPA: 248). It is interesting that Hegel seems to view this quality of art not as something that is supplied by interpretation but as a feature of the object as art. The question is then: what, on Hegel’s view, characterizes the work of art such that it can be compared to the eye, the bodily organ in which the soul is manifested? Some very general ideas introduced in a discussion of what he presents as “our representation” of art offer the key to understanding this metaphor.

Hegel considers three features of art. First, he claims, art is “made by human beings” (LPA: 187); second, it is produced “for human beings, and is first taken from the sensuous realm and exists for the senses”; third, it “embodies a particular purpose” (LPA: 187). According to this view, being an artefact is a condition of being a work of art; furthermore, art objects must be perceivable (I will return to this feature in a moment). Finally, since artefacts are usually created intentionally, the making of art is also an intentional activity. Presenting these features as part of our ordinary representation of art, Hegel seems to subscribe to all of them, although he offers his own versions of them (particularly with regard to the latter two).

As for the third feature, Hegel defends a rather strong cognitive account of the purpose of art. On his view, at its best, art is engaged in the ambitious task of “bringing to our minds and expressing the Divine, the deepest interests of mankind” (LA: 7), of “uncover[ing] and represent[ing] truth” or “what stirs in the human breast”, and of doing so, he adds, “in a pictorial, concrete way” (LPA: 208).⁶ For Hegel, what ultimately matters to human beings are the rational tendencies that animate human affairs.⁷ He further thinks that we need images of some sort in order to get a hold on our world—externalization of some kind in order to recognize who we are and what our relation to the world is. Art offers this kind of externalization; it is a mode of exploring and articulating the values and practical attitudes that inform and support a (shared) world-view—a mode

⁶ In speaking of a “supreme task” of art (Hegel LA: 7), Hegel implicitly allows that art might have other significant tasks. He also invites the thought, however, that some tasks are more significant than others. If the idea of a supreme task of art strikes many of us as *passé*, this latter view is worth considering.

⁷ Hegel was an art lover, but his attitude towards art was not that of the sophisticated art connoisseur; rather, his concern was art’s significance “for us” (cf. LPA: 186; LA: 103) as human beings in the modern world (cf. Gethmann-Siefert 2014: 107), however most people actually react to it.

of presenting insights into them (cf. Pinkard 2007: 9). This is the background to the eye metaphor, which also builds on the power of the eyes to return the gaze.

In light of this, the second feature of art, namely its being taken from the sensuous realm and existing for the senses, is of crucial importance. Given his cognitivist conception of the purpose of art, it is rather obvious that for Hegel works of art are means and objects of comprehension; they serve this function, however, as objects of intuition (and aesthetic appreciation), given to the senses. What defines art on Hegel's view is precisely its ability to present the content of thought through a non-conceptual medium—that is, sensible intuition—thereby appealing more to feeling than to rational reflection (cf. LA: 7).

This specific feature of art, its ability to convey insights via the senses, is reflected in Hegel's somewhat ambiguous formulation. On the one hand, he claims that the work of art exists for human beings' senses, "and therefore it must have sensuous materials" (LPA: 193); on the other, he maintains that "the product of art is from spirit and is for spirit" (LPA: 192), or "for intellect, for spiritual consideration" (LPA: 198). The tension between these statements dissolves, however, once we recognize that in claiming that the work of art exists for the senses, Hegel does not mean that it exists for the kind of sensory consciousness of objects that does not presuppose conceptual thought. Art is perceptible but not simply sensory (cf. LPA: 355). Perceptual experience involves individuating understanding—namely grasping what makes an artwork the individual it is—and is cognitively penetrable. When Hegel claims that "spirit should find satisfaction" by means of the sensible material of artworks (LPA: 198), he seems to presuppose that understanding an artwork is internal to perceiving it, to what we can see or hear.

The related claim that art is "from spirit" allows for a two-level reading, depending on whether we assume a modest or a strong conception of "spirit": the first level is the content that artists consciously pursue in their work (and which the audience might understand), given the conditions of the particular forms of art in which they engage; the second and deeper level is a kind of spiritual content or spirit's self-knowledge, which is somehow realized through artists' works even though they might not be conscious of it. This articulation of the content of art, to which Mario Farina draws attention (cf. Farina 2015: 36–38), is connected to the fact that on Hegel's view art not only exists as an intentional activity but also has a *telos*: it gives expression to spirit's understanding of itself. Spirit operates through artists in what they do and through art itself as a human practice (cf. Beiser 2005: 297–298). Here, I shall mainly consider the first-level reading (and the modest interpretation of the term "spirit"): what we understand in and through art is what the artist has found a way to make perceptible (cf.

LPA: 200–201) by the way she (re-)presents content and/or the way she manipulates her chosen media.

As for how Hegel conceives of the sensuous element in art, which he views as a vehicle for cognitive content, it is worth noting that his statement that art is “first” taken from the sensuous realm hints at a further stage to which that element is somehow “elevated” (to use Hegel’s term). “Elevation” in this case happens through a transformation that Hegel tries to describe by applying a theological expression. He claims that the work of art exists “as having received the baptism of the spirit” (LPA: 191–192). I suppose that by choosing the expression “baptism of the spirit”, Hegel wanted to convey the thought that in art the sensuous acquires a new status (it is revealing, incidentally, that Danto considers interpretation a transformative practice analogous to baptism; cf. Danto 1981: ch. 5).⁸ Art, Hegel maintains, is “first taken from the sensuous realm”, but just as human beings become new creatures through baptism (cf. Rom. 6; 2 Cor. 5, 17; Gal. 6, 15), so the materials of art (and even its content) undergo a kind of transformation. Works are objects brought into existence by the activities of artists. When artists bring a work into existence, they make things out of other things (stone, wood, canvas, pigments, but also sounds, words, bodily movements, etc.): materials are worked on, and works are constituted by them (although they are not identical to them). In more contemporary terms: “works are made out of the material of a medium”, where artists work on their media “under some conception of what kind of work is aimed at” (Lamarque 2010: 40–41). Through manipulation by artists, the medium (as “vehicle”) acquires intentional, aesthetic, artistic, and representational properties, becoming what Hegel calls “spiritualized sensuousness”. This expression and its equivalent—“sensualized spiritual” (LPA: 200), which we should read with both the strong and the moderate conceptions of “spirit” in mind—suggest that the material elements of art are those in and through which the “soul” of art finds a form of expression (and comprehension). Hegel uses the term “appearance” to describe the new status they thereby acquire. A quick consideration of the meaning of this word might help to highlight the transformation that occurs through the “baptism of the spirit”, or the transformative practice of art.

8 Danto thinks of interpretations “as functions which transform material objects into works of art”. Interpretation, he claims, “is in effect the lever with which an object is lifted out of the real world and into the artworld, where it becomes vested in often unexpected raiment” (Danto 1986: 39).

4 The Work of Art as Appearance

Hegel's claim that art is from spirit (again according to both the strong and the modest readings of "spirit") refers to the idea that by shaping their media artists make perceptible, accessible to intuition, the content of (spiritual) comprehension. Hegel sums up this view by saying that "the sensuous enters into art as ideal sensuousness", namely as something that has been "elevated to appearance (*Schein*)" (LPA: 200). "Appearance" is Hegel's term for the outcome of art's transformation of its sensuous materials. Interestingly, in this context he alludes to a line from the poem "The God of Greece" by Friedrich Schiller: art, Hegel claims, "has to do with the 'shadow realm' of the beautiful" (LPA: 200), thereby evoking both the inescapable aesthetic dimension of art and the character of the new ontological status acquired by the sensuous as appearance.

"Appearance" is a happily ambiguous word. On the one hand, when it is equated with "illusion", Hegel's formulation suggests that the mode of existence of art is not that of its materials, namely the actuality of external things. On Hegel's view, however, *Schein* is a correlative of *Wesen*, or essence: "for every essential thing [...] if it is not to be an empty abstraction, it must appear" (LPA: 182). Applying a theoretical notion from his philosophy (cf. SL: book II.i) to art, Hegel hints that artistic semblance is not deception. On the contrary, in and through sensuousness as appearance something can "shine" (cf. Sallis 2007: 92–93).

It is a central point in Hegel's theory of art that sensuous elements and spiritual content (or a content of comprehension) stand in a relation of co-determination. Hegel claims that "art as such consists precisely in the kinship, relation, and concrete interpenetration of meaning and shape" (LA: 304). To elevate the material qualities of art to appearance is to infuse them with meaning. What is of crucial importance here is that, according to this view, art does not simply translate pre-given content into a sensuous medium. This way of thinking is, for Hegel, a deep misunderstanding. What happens is not that "the universal representation comes first" followed by our "look[ing] around for a portrayal of it" (LPA: 291) but that the content of a work comes into being through the medium in which it is expressed (cf. Gaiger 2000: 116). This accounts, in part, for the peculiar engaging quality of art objects—the way in which they elicit a kind of response that is quite distinct from our response to mere material objects.

Hegel expresses the point by claiming that the work of art "is essentially a question, an address to the responsive breast, a call to the mind and the spirit" (LA: 71). By this Hegel suggests that works of art present themselves as things that, beyond being pleasing, are meant to be understood. Both the thought that works of art are essentially a call to the mind and the eye metaphor suggest

that in a sense works of art address us much like we address one another, prompting the thought that, just as we immediately recognize human beings as minded creatures, so we encounter the manifestation of a “soul” when we confront an art object: appearance is what a “soul”, a “spirit”, has made itself into.⁹ This is not surprising, given that, in the case of art, manifestation or expression is a relation between an artwork and an expresser, be it the author or an imagined agent: an implied author, a narrator, a character—or the Hegelian spirit in the strong sense.

Hegel’s image of the “thousand eyes” reflects this constellation of ideas. It suggests that just as the eye is the organ through which the soul appears (cf. LPA: 314), so meaning and artistic value appear in and through art’s spiritualized materials. The encounter with art mirrors the encounter with other human beings to the extent that the former is also an encounter with an “ensouled object”, as it were. Similarly, just as one human being can be “a complete enigma to another” (PI 2009: 325), the meaning of a work of art can elude our understanding.

If these suggestions are correct, then Hegel’s view of the “body” of art parallels the insight offered by Wittgenstein in his famous observation that “the human body (*Körper*) is the best picture (*Bild*) of the human soul” (PPF 2009: 25). On the other hand, this is a view to which Hegel himself subscribes when he claims that “in the body spirit is directly present for others” (LPA: 314). In his *Philosophy of Mind*, he more precisely maintains that the externality of the (trained) body “represents not itself, but the soul, of which it is the *sign*”,¹⁰ meaning that what represents the soul are actually people’s habits, that is, capabilities acquired through education and situated within the body. Interestingly, Hegel presents these as “the soul’s work of art” (EPM: 411),¹¹ thereby showing, as Paolo Giuspoli points out, that he recognizes in the concrete self-expressiveness of the human body the archetype of the work of art (cf. Giuspoli 2010: 244–245).

9 This seems to be connected to the fact that we ascribe personal qualities to many works of art—or, as Colin Lyas argues (cf. Lyas 1972), to the responses articulated in them: they can be witty, perceptive, glib, gauche, etc. This brings the conceptual proximity between persons and works of art to a deeper level.

10 Here Hegel uses the term “sign” in the same non-technical sense as at § 556, where he claims that the work of art is a concrete shape in which “natural immediacy [...] is only a sign of the Idea” (Hegel EPM: 556) (cf. Farina 2015: 185 for comment).

11 On habits, Christoph Menke writes that “the ‘ideality’ of spirit ‘has made itself so at home’ in the physical body (*Körper*)—which thus becomes the subject’s body (*Leib*)—‘that it moves about in it with freedom’ (EPM: 410)” (Menke 2013: 36). Habits are “what the soul has made itself into” (Menke 2013: 37).

Let us take stock. We have seen that both Hegel and Wittgenstein affirm the manifestative character of the human body and that both emphasize the expressiveness of the face. The human figure, we read in Hegel's account of classical art, "is the mirror of spirit": "in the body spirit is directly present for others", but "the whole of the physical body is [...] not as significant for the expression of spirit as the face" (LPA: 314). For his part, Wittgenstein writes penetratingly: "The face is the soul of the body" (CV 1980: 23e). Furthermore, both philosophers tend to apply their views on the expressiveness of the human body to art. As we have seen, Hegel chooses the expressive power of the eyes to explain the manifestative character of art. Wittgenstein occasionally speaks of the face of music (cf. CV 1980: 22e). Is Hegelian appearance, interpreted according to the eye metaphor, somehow the artistic equivalent to the human face?

In attending to this question, it is useful to consider a quote from a book by Christian Lotz on the art of Gerhard Richter. Lotz writes that "we should see a painting like a *face* that looks at us. [...] Faces have a soul. It is the same with painting" (Lotz 2015: 60). He bases this claim on the consideration that the specific way in which artists lay paint to their canvases confers to paintings a "bodily quality" (as we have seen, this is a striking aspect of Rembrandt's paintings). Furthermore, he observes that the way in which a painting's materiality makes the work present to us confers on the artwork a character that "faces us". According to Lotz, this character (which, he maintains, we should call "the bodily gesture (*Gebärde*) or *gestureness* of a painting") carries with it "the immediate realization of meaning" (Lotz 2015: 60).

Lotz uses the word "*Gebärde*", recalling Hans Georg Gadamer's account of gestures as "something wholly bodily *and* [...] wholly psychic (*seelisch*). There is no inner, which is differentiated from the bodily gesture (*Gebärde*), in which it is revealed. What the bodily gesture (*Gebärde*) as bodily gesture (*Gebärde*) reveals, is wholly its own being" (Gadamer 1967, qtd. in Lotz 2015: 59–60).¹² What Gadamer points out here is that a *Gebärde* does not connect inner to outer, mind to body. Rather, in a gesture what is expressed is present *in* and *as* the expression itself.

If ascribing a *face* to paintings—or at least to some kinds of paintings—equates to ascribing to them the character of a gesture, then paintings, just like *Gebärde*, do not point to or hint at meaning but instead *are* meaning: mean-

¹² Interestingly, Wittgenstein uses "*Gebärde*" in many of his remarks on music. In a particularly intriguing example, he writes: "For me the musical phrase is a gesture (*eine Gebärde*). It insinuates itself into my life. I adopt it as my own" (CV 1980: 73e).

ing is present *in* them. This is a view for which, as I have tried to show, Wittgenstein and Hegel offer support.¹³

5 Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have considered the aesthetic dualism that accompanies the metaphysical distinction between persons and bodies in the context of the philosophy of art. I have argued that this dualism leads us to underestimate the relation between the materiality or the “body” of works of art and their meaning and artistic properties (their “soul”). Commenting on remarks by Wittgenstein on the expressiveness of the human body and by Hegel on art, I have offered a series of considerations aimed at avoiding body-soul dualism with regard to works of art and at defending the role of the perceptual presence of artworks. In these concluding remarks, I would like at least to hint at an aspect that has thus far remained in the background, an aspect that is important for both Hegel and Wittgenstein—namely that neither the encounter with persons nor the encounter with works of art happens in a vacuum. Context is important. We can view the human body as a picture of the human soul because we react to it as the body of a living being engaged in activity in a particular situation (cf. Z 1981: 534; cf. also PPF 2009: 1–2) that is lived and shared with others in a world of language and culture, of significance, in which people acquire and demonstrate the capacities that mark them out as human beings (cf. Dilman 2002: 55). Similarly, works of art are embedded in the human world and human practices, and their existence as objects with aesthetic, expressive, representational and other properties depends on the possibility of being produced and responded to in appropriate ways. The intentionality of works connects them rather directly with what can be thought and perceived in a cultural world (cf. Lamarque 2010: 67–77; Sedivy 2016: chs. 4–5).

Finally, I wish very briefly to say something about an objection that might be made in response to my considerations: namely that many contemporary artworks foster aesthetic dualism since perceptual presence is not important for them. Conceptual art, for example, has challenged the role of perceptual engagement with works and has perhaps even done away with the object and what it looks like, in favour of the linguistic specification of content. On this approach,

¹³ It is worth recalling that, according to Kant, pictorial art (*bildende Kunst*), to which paintings belong, “can be counted (by analogy) as gesture (*Gebärdung*) in a language”. Kant justifies this claim by observing that “the spirit of the artist gives corporeal expression through these shapes to what he has thought, and makes the things itself speak as it were in mime” (CPJ: 201).

art is at most a means of making ideas available; ideas are the medium, the real locus of the work (cf. Costello 2013).

I do not deny this. With this said, I would like to note, first, that even though many conceptual artists represent themselves as breaking away from traditional forms of visual art, what they do stands in relation to artistic practices that attribute a role to the perceptual nature of art objects and makes sense only against the background of those practices (cf. Sedivy 2016: 160–170). Second, they nonetheless produce objects that can be seen and that confront us perceptually. Therefore, as Peter Lamarque wisely suggests, rather than trying to make conceptual art non-perceptual, “it might be better to admit a perceptual level but somehow make it subservient to the conceptual” (Lamarque 2010: 226): there must be something, Lamarque claims, “that counts as perceiving (or experiencing) conceptual art *as conceptual art*”. Since ideas are paramount for conceptual artists, objects (or performances) of conceptual art, as Lamarque suggests, “must invite a kind of perception which makes salient particular aspects and suggests significance for them” (Lamarque 2010: 230–231). Perceiving conceptual art *as conceptual art* involves perceiving salience and significance; ideas inform our perception of the objects (or performances) that conceptual artists use as vehicles of thought. Even if “slimmed down” to a physical medium that acts as a vehicle for the transmission of ideas, however, the body still counts and is not separable from the “soul”.¹⁴

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¹⁴ I am grateful to Carolyn Benson, Francesco Campana and Wilhelm Vossenkuhl for their helpful feedback on an earlier version of this paper.

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