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## HEGEL'S CONCEPTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POETRY AND HISTORY

### *Abstract*

This paper addresses the way Hegel determines the difference between poetry (i.e., literature) and history. Hegel's position is particularly significant for understanding both the basic features of the two fields and the implications that their relationship generates, even in contemporary debates. Starting from a comparison with Aristotle's fundamental position, I will show how the Hegelian proposal, while initially appearing akin to that of the Greek philosopher, actually differs profoundly from it. This divergence has to do with their different conceptions of the relationship between the two disciplines and philosophy. Unlike Aristotle, for Hegel history is more philosophical than poetry, because, to be genuinely history, it must itself become philosophy. At the same time, if poetry becomes philosophy, it loses its specificity and ceases to be art. To reach this determination, I will show that the key factors concern how the individual practice of the two disciplines is conceived and, more importantly, the different ways they relate to universality.

### *1. Introduction*

The topic of the relationship between literature and history is recurring and concerns the conceptual determination of both fields. Demarcating a clear line between a human activity like literature, which can be based on actual historical events, and history, which can be written in a literary way, does not seem easy. This is a subject on which Western thought has questioned itself since its beginnings and which constantly returns when it comes to understanding the kind of truth conveyed by both literature and history. These kinds of issues are central to determining the status and methodology of history as well as literature's forms of representing reality. Although the topic constantly emerges and

renews itself, the main position that gave rise to the debate, that of Aristotle, is still the one with which discussions must first deal<sup>1</sup>.

Starting from an awareness of a certain proximity between the two activities, Aristotle in the *Poetics* underlines how the difference between poetry and history is not based on a mere formal issue, i.e., the use of versification or exposition in prose. One could put Herodotus' prose into poetry, and it would still remain history, Aristotle claims. Instead, he determines the relationship between the two fields according to two guidelines: the first states that "the one [i.e., the historian] tells what happened, the other [i.e., the poet] [tells] the sort of things that can happen", and more precisely the things "that, according to likelihood and necessity, can [happen]"<sup>2</sup>; the second, which derives, according to his argument, from the first, concerns the fact that "poetry deals more with universals, history with particulars" and, for this reason, "poetry is a more philosophical and more serious business than history"<sup>3</sup>. In short, because it is more concerned with universals, poetry is closer to philosophy<sup>4</sup>.

In determining the status of poetry (i.e., epic and drama), Aristotle not only sets forth fundamental considerations about the activity of the historian<sup>5</sup>, but also raises crucial questions about the determination of philosophy itself in its relationship to the first two fields<sup>6</sup>.

In this paper, I will show how Hegel's determination of the relationship between poetry and history sets itself, at least initially, in Aristotelian terms, but differs from the Greek philosopher in its outcomes, especially with respect to its connection with philosophy<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> A great number of studies on these issues take their cue from Aristotle or identify his proposal as an essential perspective. To get an idea of the variety of approaches and problems that are developed around the Aristotelian view, see, among the most recent contributions: Davies 2007: 143-144; Lamarque 2009: 223-225, Eldridge 2010, Lamarque 2014: 124-125, Gosetti-Ferencei 2018: 103-104, Farina 2020: 147. I would like to thank Anna Katsman for language editing.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b 1-5. To the poet who can also happen to represent facts that have actually happened – Aristotle points out shortly after – the important thing is that they are presented in a plausible way (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b 28-34).

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b 5-8.

<sup>4</sup> For discussions of the relationship between poetry and history in Aristotle, the universal character of poetry, and the fact that for the Greek philosopher poetry is more philosophical than history, see Heath 1991 and de Ste. Croix 1992.

<sup>5</sup> On Aristotle and the historiographical method see Ginzburg 1994.

<sup>6</sup> A particularly relevant discussion of the Aristotelian position within an argument about the boundaries of philosophy can be found in Danto 1986: 150-154.

<sup>7</sup> The relationship between Hegelian and Aristotelian philosophy has been investigated from different points of view. For an accurate and comprehensive study on the subject, see Ferrarin 2004. Regarding the aesthetic field, see Paolucci 1970 and the more recent Iannelli 2018. With respect to the conception of history, see the first two chapters of Chierighin 2000: 23-105. Des-

The relationship between poetry and history in Hegel is a useful point of view from which several issues concerning both the determination of the former and the latter can be seen more clearly. At the same time, it is a relationship in which some of the fundamental features of Hegel's aesthetic conception, his view of history, and the general framework of his philosophy emerge. Moreover, an understanding of the Hegelian development of Aristotle's arguments allows for a deeper insight into the relationship between poetry and history in general, including contemporary phenomena that call into question the very boundaries between the two fields<sup>8</sup>.

After addressing the general features of Hegel's position and its implications, with a focus on the role of individual practice (2), I will emphasize the fact that for Hegel history is a thing of the present as opposed to art's past character (3). Finally, I will address the real crux of the relationship between the two disciplines, namely, how they convey the universal (4).

## 2. *Individual practice between poetry and history*

Hegel is aware that there may be a risk of confusing the fields of poetry (i.e., literature) and history, and that they may at times appear to overlap<sup>9</sup>. The issue is explicitly addressed in his lectures on the philosophy of art, but also emerges in the philosophy of history and in the *Encyclopedia*.

Indeed, in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*, he takes care to demarcate the field of poetry from that of two other kinds of discourse, oratory and history. His goal is to show the features of free art. These two kinds of discourse differ from art, because they are limited – and therefore not free – with respect to their material and purposes.

Regarding history, which is what we are interested in here, it does not belong to free art because, in the first place, its content is given; it is based on facts, on what happened. Poetry, on the contrary, can certainly use events and situations that really existed, but it can also not do so; therefore, it is not constrained with respect to the matter it has to address. Secondly, precisely because its content is given and therefore external, the creative intervention of the individual in historical work is reduced. A kind of contingency comes into play. This is the contingency of the events that happen in real life, on

mond 1984 addresses the issue of the relationship between art and history in Hegel and of the historicity of art, moving from the Aristotelian passage cited and pointing out the convergences more than the differences between the two positions.

<sup>8</sup>Think, for instance, of the nonfiction novel, in which the historical approach and the chronicle of facts are made to fall within an artistic-literary context. For a philosophical discussion of this kind of literary artwork see: Lamarque 2014: 83-104.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. VÄ (Hotho 23): 487; Engl. transl.: 409.

which the historian cannot intervene directly, while artistic practice, to the contrary, can tame, reshape, and change<sup>10</sup>. In Aristotelian terms, history tells of “what happened” and not “according to [the] likelihood and necessity, [of what] can [happen]”.

However, the rest of the characterization of the relationship between history and poetry ceases to be Aristotelian – or rather, begins to be articulated in properly Hegelian terms, and on a decisive point with respect to Aristotle’s argumentation. For Hegel, history exhibits the universal in the particular in a way that differs from poetry, and this emerges first when considering the role of the individual within the two practices. If history, in fact, has a purpose that is in a sense given by the external object, i.e., the facts and circumstances described, and is largely independent of those who expose it, art has an end that is elaborated by the artist who personally determines the proper end of the specific work of art. The historian’s elaboration is externally conditioned, while the poet’s follows a different logic.

In Hegel’s account, the examples of history that run the greatest risk of being mistaken for poetry are those of the great historians of ancient Greece such as Herodotus and Thucydides<sup>11</sup>. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, he describes their approach in these terms:

[ancient Greek historians’] descriptions are for the most part limited to deeds, events, and states of society, which they had before their eyes, and whose spirit they shared. They simply transferred what was passing in the world around them, to the realm of representative intellect. An external phenomenon is thus translated into an internal conception. In the same way the *poet* operates upon the material supplied him by his emotions; projecting it into an image for the conceptive faculty. These original historians did, it is true, find statements and narratives of other men ready to hand. One person cannot be an eye or ear witness of everything. But they make use of such aids only as the poet does of that heritage of an already-formed language, to which he owes so much: merely as an ingredient<sup>12</sup>.

The common element between the historian’s and poet’s work is linguistic representation. The word is the medium they both use as the vehicle of their practice.

Compared to other artistic genres, poetry is the only genre that does not present in a sense-based medium, but uses an artistic, poetic version of the medium that is already proper to another form of absolute spirit, namely

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Ä* III: 260; Engl. transl.: 988.

<sup>11</sup> Hegel says, for instance, that “[w]e speak of the art of Herodotus, and the like” (*VÄ* (Hotho 23): 487; Engl. transl.: 409). Cf. *Ä* III: 257-258; Engl. transl.: 986-987; *VÄ* (Ascheberg 20/21): 188; *VÄ* (Heimann 28/29): 188.

<sup>12</sup> *VPG*: 11-12; Engl. transl.: 1.

religion. The realm of art is, in fact, that of sensibility, which uses intuition (*Anschauung*) that of religion is representation (*Vorstellung*), which is detached from sensuous materiality (while the concept, proper to philosophy, assimilates and articulates the first two). Poetry uses figurative representation (*bildliche Vorstellung*) as its medium, which is a particular way of employing linguistic representation. This circumstance makes it a very special art, one that requires comparison with other kinds of discourse that nonetheless make use of language<sup>13</sup>.

In general, freedom distinguishes poetry's use of linguistic representation. The poet, unlike the historian, is not conditioned by the external material she uses, but only by her own inclinations and the internal necessity of the artwork (it is important to emphasize that this necessity is the one internal to the work of art, as we will also see below). Although the historian may employ language at least in part in a way that approaches the poet's free use, her work finds greater limitations, because she works with external material that exists before her intervention and must be reported<sup>14</sup>. In other words, she must respond to a sort of criterion of correspondence with the surrounding reality, which the poet is not obliged to consider:

The individual is an end in itself, in and for itself. This feature excludes history from art, for history involves a purpose that is not posited as individual purpose but is instead independent of individuality as such<sup>15</sup>.

For this reason<sup>13</sup>, history is not art; it lacks the complete freedom of its content and purposes. The individual, in historical practice, does not show herself as the producer of something that is not there, as an artist producing a work does. Historians find themselves working over material that is already there, from which their work is determined, and which, in a sense, albeit through personal reworkings, they must respect: they "elaborate the events, the deeds, and the states of society with which they are conversant, into an object for the conceptive faculty"<sup>16</sup>. History is conditioned by purposes that come from the outside and its way of proceeding must correspond, unlike art, to the requests that the world, and not the subject or the artwork, poses.

<sup>13</sup> On the peculiar character of poetry in relation to the other arts, cf. Wagner 1974: 73-125; Werle 2005: 68-79; Ophälders 2014; Campana 2015; Ferreiro 2015. Christoph Menke addresses the special status of poetry in Hegel and its "end" as the "beginning of philosophy" precisely via a comparison with the Aristotelian passage previously cited in Menke 2010

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Chiereghin 2000: 47-49.

<sup>15</sup> VÄ (Hotho 23): 487; Engl. transl.: 409. Cf. VÄ (Heimann 28/29): 189.

<sup>16</sup> VPG: 12; Engl. transl. modified: 2.

### 3. *History as a thing of the present*

It is important to note that for Hegel, in earliest antiquity, there is no real history. According to Hegel, in fact, “[h]istory is not the heroic age, for this heroic age lies on the far side of history and belongs to art”<sup>17</sup>. The Greeks, for example, reshape “Legends, Ballad stories, Traditions”, which “are but dim and hazy forms of historical apprehension”<sup>18</sup>. In this sense, Homer or the most ancient sagas tell about a remote age; they represent the ‘Bible’ of a people, that is the book around which a community constitutes itself and establishes its own morality<sup>19</sup>, and art in this case becomes “the peoples’ teacher”<sup>20</sup>. However, this is an artistic account, not yet a historical one. In order for history to be produced, the “domain of reality – actually seen, or capable of being so –”<sup>21</sup> is necessary. An external object is needed that allows itself, through linguistic representation, to be reworked and reported as historical fact and at a higher level of awareness. This aspect tells us something about the status of history and reminds us of something else with respect to art.

If we take into consideration the *Introduction* to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* Hegel distinguishes three kinds of history: original history, reflective history, and philosophical history. In this succession, which, after the non-historical period of the ancient sagas, reaches the third kind of history, which is the one that Hegel considers the most accomplished, a process of philosophization of historical procedure develops, which coincides with historical progress and the rise of modernity.

The first kind of history is found predominantly in ancient Greece (Hegel mentions Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, but goes so far as to include Caesar’s commentaries and even Guicciardini, Cardinal de Retz and Frederick II the Great). Original history tells of the facts as they appear to the eyes of historians or through the accounts they are able to capture: “What is present and living in their environment is their proper material. The influences that have formed the writer are identical with those which have moulded the events that constitute the matter of his story”<sup>22</sup>. They “merely wrote down the events that they experienced and described the deeds of which they were aware”<sup>23</sup>; through their stories they restore the social environment in which they are immersed,

<sup>17</sup> VÄ (Hotho 23): 487; Engl. transl.: 409.

<sup>18</sup> VPG: 12; Engl. transl.: 2.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. VÄ (Hotho 23): 498; Engl. transl.: 423.

<sup>20</sup> VÄ (Hotho 23): 242; Engl. transl.: 207. Cf. D’Angelo 2013.

<sup>21</sup> VPG: 12; Engl. transl.: 2.

<sup>22</sup> VPG: 12; Engl. transl.: 2.

<sup>23</sup> VPWG 22/23: 5; Engl. transl.: 133.

the culture and the vision of their era and their people. They report what they see and hear, and in this kind of history “[r]eflection is excluded because the author is identical with the material”<sup>24</sup>.

In the second kind of history, the reflexive one, there is a movement of detachment with respect to what appears in front of the historian<sup>25</sup>. It is a kind of history “whose spirit transcends the present”<sup>26</sup>, in the sense that it takes the material of the historical narrative, and reworks it according to reasoning that is applied abstractly to this material. There are four sub-types of this history. In *universal history*, which is very close to original history (indeed, historians such as Livy, Diodorus Siculus or Johannes von Müller are mentioned), the historian tries “to gain a view of the entire history of a people or a country, or of the world”<sup>27</sup>. *Pragmatical history* tries to trace a general sense of historical facts through links of cause and effect. Here “[t]he occurrences are, indeed, various, but the idea which pervades them – their deeper import and connection – is *one*”, and this is what makes it possible to trace the past back to the present of the historian<sup>28</sup>. It is thought that a moral lesson for the present can then usually be drawn on this basis. In *critical history*, which for Hegel is the most common in Germany during his time, “[i]t is not history itself that is [...] presented”, but a sort of “History of History; a criticism of historical narratives and an investigation of their truth and credibility” through the personal, original and arbitrary gaze of the historian<sup>29</sup>. Finally, the fourth kind of reflexive history is one that specializes in *fragmentary and sectional histories*, such as the histories of, e.g., art, law, and religion. These are transitional to the next kind of history, because, if investigated properly, they take on universal and philosophical perspectives, although they still operate at the level of abstraction and particular universality<sup>30</sup>.

Hegel considers the third kind of history the true concept of history. It is philosophical history, which presents itself as “the *thoughtful consideration of it* [history]”<sup>31</sup>. This is not a history that extrapolates a particular aspect of universal history, but its point of view is that of “a *concrete* universal, the spiritual principle of peoples and the history of this principle”<sup>32</sup>. It brings out the rationality

<sup>24</sup> VPWG 22/23: 7; Engl. transl.: 134-135. Cf. VPG: 12; Engl. transl.: 2.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. VPWG 22/23: 8; Engl. transl.: 136.

<sup>26</sup> VPG: 14; Engl. transl.: 4.

<sup>27</sup> VPG: 14; Engl. transl.: 4.

<sup>28</sup> VPG: 16; Engl. transl.: 6.

<sup>29</sup> VPG: 18; Engl. transl.: 7.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. VPWG 22/23: 13; Engl. transl.: 140.

<sup>31</sup> VPG: 20; Engl. transl.: 8.

<sup>32</sup> VPWG 22/23: 14; Engl. transl.: 140.

present in historical events, that is, the reason that “governs the world”<sup>33</sup> and that constitutes the data that the historian must understand and interpret<sup>34</sup>.

In the course of the ages, history therefore affirms itself as something that acquires more and more of a rational dimension: from a mythical and artistic tale to an account of facts, up to becoming an object of abstract reflection and finally philosophy itself. It is in the end, with the rise of philosophical history, the one that Hegel proposes as the true historical method, that history appears as an activity proper to modernity. It is a history that is no longer art but has already become science<sup>35</sup>.

From an epochal point of view, this is a process that is in some ways the opposite of the one concerning art. Art – explains Hegel – reached its peak in classical Greece, where it was at the center of society and gave it socio-cultural orientation. In modernity, instead, art has become something partial, lateral, something that belongs in its completeness to an era that no longer exists. In modernity, art no longer has the centrality it once possessed<sup>36</sup>. If art, on the one hand, has become “for us, a thing of the past”<sup>37</sup>, history, on the other, seems to stand as something that emerges in its accomplishment and affirms itself in the present. This is due to the philosophical input that history acquires in the present and that for art is either a threat to its own status or produces scientific reasoning about art, art criticism, and the philosophical history of art<sup>38</sup>.

The process of philosophization, which is for Hegel the typical trait of his present (and future), allows history a sort of progress in its status, while forcing art either to a closure in the past or to a radical transformation in which the element that makes it art, that is, the centrality of the sensuous, seems to disappear. If art wants to remain art, that is, wants to remain that form of absolute spirit that has sensibility as its medium, then it cannot but be for modernity something of the past. In this sense, unlike what Aristotle says, history for Hegel is closer to philosophy, in the sense that, in order to be properly history, it must become *philosophical history*. Precisely because philosophy emerges with all its strength, art is set aside, is relegated to a secondary, though nevertheless still important, role. In the confrontation with art, the philosophical element of history is shown in full in its way of expressing the universal.

<sup>33</sup> VPG 23; Engl. transl.: 11. Cf. VPWG 22/23: 14; Engl. transl.: 140.

<sup>34</sup> For recent critical comparisons of the different kinds of history in Hegel, see McCarney 2000: 10-15 and Hodgson 2012: 11-30.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Chierighin 2000: 43-47. On the speculative dimension of history, see also Angehrn 1981 e Angehrn 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Gethmann-Siefert 1986: 75.

<sup>37</sup> VÄ (Hotho 23): 511; Engl. transl. modified: 439. Cf. Ä I: 25; Engl. transl.: 11.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. VÄ (Hotho 23): 224; Engl. transl.: 186.



#### 4. *A different way of manifesting the universal*

Aristotle considered poetry closer to philosophy than history because the former dealt with the universal, while the latter with the particular. Hegel differs from Aristotle also in this respect, and it is probably at this level that the greatest difference between the two fields should be sought.

It might seem that poetry, as art, is closer to philosophy than history in Hegel because, as a form of absolute spirit, it shares the same content and “the most exalted character [die höchste Bestimmung]”<sup>39</sup> with philosophy (and religion). However, the way it articulates this content is what makes the distance from philosophy more pronounced than history.

In fact, both history and art have the task of manifesting the universal in the particular, but the way of manifestation is radically divergent. History – the accomplished one, the philosophical one – is in some way already science and therefore the articulation of the union between universal and particular is already that of the concept. It can grasp this union in events and circumstances through a fully mediated understanding. On the contrary, art is indeed the union of the particular with the universal, of material and idea, but in the immediacy of the scattered individualities of the artworks and in the capacity to grasp this union in sensuous intuition. What art lacks, or what it manifests differently, is the degree of mediation with which this universal is expressed:

Scientific knowledge [...] has a different object than what is given for it immediately in things; so it goes beyond what is immediate. Art does not do this, does not go beyond what is sensuous, beyond what is offered to it. Instead art has for its object the sensuous as it is immediately. [...] Accordingly, what is sensuous exists for spirit, but not in such way that the thought of this sensuous existence, its essential or inner being, is art’s object.<sup>40</sup>

In this different way of relating to and expressing the universal (that is, through sensitivity and in an immediate way), art delimits its field and determines itself as a specific and autonomous form of absolute knowledge, differentiating itself from thought.

At this point, however, it becomes more complicated to understand how that particular art that is poetry manifests the universal. As we have seen above, poetry no longer deals with sensuous material and, nevertheless, falls within the sphere of art, acquiring a status all its own. Indeed, if compared to the other arts, it is “the universal, all-embracing art, is art ascended to the highest spirituality”<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> VÄ (Hotho 23): 222; Engl. transl.: 184.

<sup>40</sup> VÄ (Hotho 23): 235; Engl. transl.: 199.

<sup>41</sup> VÄ (Hotho 23): 255; Engl. transl.: 218. Cf. VÄ (Ascheberg 20/21): 187; VÄ (Kehler 26): 156; VÄ (von der Pfordten 26): 222-223; VÄ (Heimann 28/29): 189.

The peculiarity of poetry makes it exceptional and places it in a borderline condition with respect to its own being as art. Radicalizing the condition of poetry and reaching its extreme consequences, poetry might ascend “beyond itself” and become prose, thought<sup>42</sup>. The possibility of becoming thought is the greatest risk that poetry, using the medium of linguistic representation, runs as art<sup>43</sup>. It is precisely at this level that the difficulty of differentiating it from history, which is already thought, arises.

However, in spite of this paradoxical condition, poetry – the most properly poetry, the most accomplished – remains art and therefore, even if it does not have to do with the sensuous materiality of the other arts, it does not (and should not) manifest the degree of mediation that is proper to the concept. Its realm is still individual intuition, even when it tries to propose a universal<sup>44</sup>. This universal, therefore, does not emerge in the complete mediation of the concept, but has to deal with the dimension that is proper to the sphere of the sensuous particular. The universal in poetry is linked to particularity in a way that is not yet fully articulated or that is articulated only in the specific terms in which art articulates mediation. Hegel notes this aspect and the problematic nature of it in the annotation to §549 of the *Encyclopedia*, in which he addresses the proximity of history and the (historical) novel:

It was a correct instinct which sought to banish such portraiture of the particular and the gleaning of insignificant traits, into the Novel (as in the celebrated romances of Walter Scott, &c.). Where the picture presents an unessential aspect of life it is certainly in good taste to conjoin it with an unessential material, such as the romance takes from private events and subjective passions. But to take the individual pettinesses of an age and of the persons in it, and, in the interest of so-called truth, weave them into the picture of general interests, is not only against taste and judgment, but violates the principles of objective truth. The only truth for mind is the substantial and underlying essence, and not the trivialities of external existence and contingency<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> VÄ (Hotho 23): 255; Engl. transl.: 218. Here the term “prose” is not understood in a merely formal sense, in the terms of what is not in verse, but in the sense of what is not “poetry”, that is, literature. In general, in Hegel’s aesthetics “poetry” and “prose” represent two general domains, two different approaches to the world, going beyond the strictly literary or artistic domain. On the subject see Vieira da S. Filho 2008; Hebing 2018: 232-236; Emundts 2021.

<sup>43</sup> I have discussed this problematic aspect of the Hegelian theory of literature in Campana 2019: 127-182.

<sup>44</sup> In this case, Hegel takes Dante as a particularly illustrative example: “A work of poetry can certainly also have an aim of a wholly universal kind, as in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, which portrays the divine world, what is wholly universal, and the individual’s relationship to it. However, in the Christian world the individual as such is infinite purpose, and this universal purpose is at the same time the individual aspect of the individual. This divine world has to do with the individual” (VÄ (Hotho 23): 487; Engl. transl.: 409).

<sup>45</sup> Enz 30, § 549 Anm.

The novel, as an epic form in modernity that represents the ordinariness of life, could come close to the historical account. It documents facts (whether invented or not, that is not what interests Hegel here), but it does so by mixing the universal – the rationality proper to time, which for Hegel is manifested primarily through great events and subjectivities – with ordinary things, particular situations, and everyday life. From this point of view, the necessity of the Aristotelian matrix, which concerned art and which has been noted above also with regard to Hegel, is a necessity internal to the work of art, but it is not the accomplished necessity. The latter is what only the concept can grasp, even externally in the consideration of the course of events. There is no possibility in art of an articulation between universal and particular that is capable of fully seizing the universal that is present in this union<sup>46</sup>.

It is therefore probably in its different way of coming to terms with the universal that poetry, beyond its extremely particular status, differs most from history according to Hegel. Despite its use of linguistic representation and the fact that it risks becoming other than itself as the prose of thought, poetry remains art and thus has the degree of mediation between the universal and particular that remains that of intuition. History, on the contrary, while making use of linguistic representation, already does so with a level of scientific articulation, which is proper to philosophy.

## *5. Conclusions*

In determining the relationship between poetry and history, Hegel seems to take up the terms of the Aristotelian position, but develops them in a particular way and eventually detaches himself from them in a significant way. For Hegel, too, the historian is concerned with what has happened and the poet with what might happen. However, if the poet does so according to “likelihood and necessity”, these criteria pertain to the internal composition of the work of art. The individuality of the poet makes up his work of art with a personal intervention that is not possible to the historian and tries to grasp the specific necessity proper to this work of art. The historian, on the other hand, remains conditioned by what happens outside; she cannot move arbitrarily in handling her material, but must follow the necessity that is proper to the rationality of events. Hegel takes

<sup>46</sup> Hegel states that the artwork articulates the universal in such a way that the material immediately existing in the world, which is that of “historiography” (probably referring generically to the writing of history, not to the actual philosophy of history), is devoid of the contingency that characterizes the latter, responds to the necessity proper to the artwork and “brings before us the eternal powers that govern history without this appendage of the immediate sensuous present and its unstable appearance”. At the same time, however, he immediately points out how the reality expressed through the necessity of art is not as accomplished as that of philosophy (and, one might add, of philosophical history) (cf. *Ä I*: 22-23; Engl. transl.: 9).

up Anaxagoras' notion of a νοῦς that regulates the world<sup>47</sup>, for which reason is in the world and rules it. However, he thinks of this rationality in modern terms, as something that does not simply remain in the world, but is necessarily realized in historical progress and that history, as a discipline, must comprehend. This necessity gives history conceptual and scientific, that is, philosophical, status. For this reason, history is certainly closer to philosophy in the eyes of Hegel, while poetry, to maintain its specificity, must be sure not to transform into philosophy. Greater or lesser proximity to philosophy turns out to be a crucial point: a poetic art that becomes philosophy is a poetic art that ceases to be art, while a philosophical history is a history that realizes itself, that is actually history.

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. VPG: 23; Engl. transl.:25. On the appropriation of the Greek concept of νοῦς by Hegel (moreover, precisely in the Aristotelian reformulation), and on the relationship between art and philosophy from it, see Snyder 2006.

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