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Made and yet true: on the aesthetics of the presence of the heroic

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Made and Yet True.
On the Aesthetics of the
Presence of the Heroic

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ABSTRACT. In Modern times, the figure of the hero lacks the power to convince: he is made and untrue. The same is true of art and popular culture, the places where the hero is able to survive. In contrast to that Hegelian thesis, the area which might be said to have advanced to become the central system of heroes in Modern society is that of sport. Here the star resembles the hero. Sport is also the starting point for Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's rethinking of the concept of presence, which he contrasts to the concept of sense and interpretation. But the relationship between these poles has to be seen as an oscillation. Gumbrecht seeks support from Heidegger, but does not clearly distinguish between the early and the later Heidegger. Whereas the one interprets this oscillation practically, the other interprets it paritetically. Gumbrecht also does not distinguish carefully enough between the lived experience of presence and an aesthetic experience of presence. It is distinctive for an aesthetic experience that it is somatically triggered and, at the same time, accompanied by an intuitive consciousness. It is an interplay of elements of tension. In Kantian terms, it has the status of an as-if. Works of art are the paradigmatic objects of such an experience. They are made and yet true, and that means: although they make it clear that they are not true, just mere fictions, they manifestly appear *as if* they were true.

1. Hegel, Modernity and Art

I should like to begin by reminding us all of a sociophilosophical theory which states that heroes no longer really have a place within the structure of Modern society. Here 'Modern' refers to an age characterised by

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a constitutional division of powers, individual freedom and an economic division of labour. Hegel, the first to come up with this description at the beginning of the 19th century, also called it "prosaic" and contrasted it with that other extreme, the "mythical" age. In Modernity, everything is rational, sober and routine. The narrative form in keeping with these characteristics is no longer the epic, the tragedy, lyricism or the novel, but prose. The Modern age is in fact no longer reflected in art at all, only in science and a philosophy which has become scientific. At the beginning of the 20th century, Max Weber was later to speak of the "desenchantment" of Western culture brought about by the Modern age.[1] Meadows containing streams and silver birch trees have ceased to be home to the fairies and spirits celebrated in fairytales and romantic poems. Celebration still takes place, but nobody seriously believes in them anymore. And this is the situation facing art in Modernity: it still sings its songs, tells its enchanting stories, paints its figures and symbols of horror on the wall, or maybe just the screen, but people no longer perceive them as truthful, let alone *the* truth, or at least not with conviction. Modern art is made; it is no longer true.

According to Hegel, and also to Weber, this is also the situation facing heroism in the Modern age. As a way of acting, and as a character model, heroism belongs in the past, in a Premodern age, in other words an age not yet familiar with constitutional democracy, the bourgeoisie and capitalism. In the Post-mythical age, and especially the Modern age, heroism can only emerge in two contexts: firstly, under the abnormal conditions

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[1] Cf. Josef Früchtl, *The Impertinent Self. A Heroic History of Modernity*, Stanford UP, 2009, p. 65 ff, 137 ff. The conflict between civilians and heroes, as well as the tendency towards exclusion, is not only an invention of Hegel's, however. This theme has been found in the literature and essays on social theory since the late 18th century. Schiller, for example, in *The Robbers*, used his main character to complain about the "weak" aristocratic "century of eunuchs", good for nothing except for "denigrating Ancient heroes with tragedies". In Jean Paul's *Titan*, a bourgeois protagonist yearns for "war and deeds". And Kleist, completely in line with Hegel, wrote that "all major virtues have become unnecessary since order has been invented". Mareen van Marwyck has analysed heroism from a *gender* theoretical perspective, interestingly emphasising grace as an aesthetic of violence with female connotations, cf. *Gewalt und Anmut. Weiblicher Heroismus in der Literatur und Ästhetik um 1800*, Bielefeld 2010, also containing the citations from Schiller, Jean Paul and Kleist (p. 44, m*y translations*).

of revolution or war; secondly, under normal conditions, within the realm of art, i.e. that medium which, as has just been suggested, seems to be decreasingly in keeping with the times as a medium of truth.

Thus in Post-heroic and prosaic times, the place for heroes is art. Not only do we glean our knowledge of heroes solely from art, from Ancient epics and tragedies, but also, more significantly for Hegel, a structural agreement exists between art and heroism. Just as the hero *embodies* something of general validity, so the artist in his works *presents* something of general validity. The hero is the personification of a sociocultural whole, an individual who embodies a community, a *volonté générale*. Correspondingly, the artist is the hero of a sociocultural truth brought into play by his work. He brings an "idea", in other words a grasped reality, into play. According to Hegel, this is a completely appropriate description of artistic competence in Post-heroic and Pre-bourgeois times, especially in Ancient Greece, but it is definitely no longer appropriate in the age of civilians. Nevertheless, in art historical terms and especially since the mid-19th century, this notion, referred to polemically as 'avant garde' has characterised the self-comprehension of the aesthetic Modern age increasingly aggressively, as perspective has increasingly dwindled. If the place for heroes is art and if, in the Modern age, art can no longer be a place of truth, then the figure of the hero, too, lacks the power to convince: he is made and untrue.

2. Sport, Stars and Zidane

In Post-mythical and especially Modern times, heroism therefore has its place, sociophilosophically speaking, in art and popular culture. Recently this theory has been complemented by a sociological one. In a differentiated society, in the sense of Max Weber or Parsons and Luhmann, several subsystems are available to heroism besides art and popular culture, for example politics, religion or science. But the area which has advanced to become the "central system of heroes in Modern society" is that of sport or, more precisely, professional sport. It is "the only area of society able to produce real-life heroes in a non-dangerous and still socially acceptable

manner."[2] Here we must stress that in this area we are dealing with *real*-life heroes, and increasingly also heroines, whereas the only other area in the running under the conditions of the Modern age, as already asserted by Hegel, namely that of art or, more broadly, popular culture, is especially concerned with *unreal* heroes and heroines, with heroes and heroines who may be real people, as actors, pop stars or entertainers, and yet who are not really real since they primarily exist at a second level, that of the cinema or TV screen. These sometimes real, sometimes unreal heroic entities are known as "stars".

It is no coincidence that this term emerged with the medium of film, at the beginning of the 20th century, and yet we should not forget that the *principle* of the star was introduced as early as the 19th century. At that time, the idea of heroes and high-flyers was rooted in the theatre.[3] The following elements have remained characteristic of stars right up to the present day: having a skill and standing on a stage. Having a skill means mastering the rules. Masters know their rules inside out. They apply them with seeming nonchalance, in a manner which surprises us, which enables us to see or hear something we have never witnessed before. Like the way Marilyn Monroe sang "I wanna be loved by you" in a soft and creamy, lascivious voice, with a slight vibrato and wide, sad and confused, childlike eyes, before adding a "boop-boop-a-doop" in keeping with the genre of the time; or the way Franz Beckenbauer could pass the ball by flicking his ankle, the way Diego Maradona could steal the ball from the centre circle and then zig-zag past all the players standing in his way, or the way Zinedine Zidane could dance powerfully and elegantly through the football arena like a bull[4] (how could we ever forget the France vs. Brazil match in the 2006 World Cup when the Brazilian football stars, as was accurately noted by a sports journalist[5], ran along beside Zidane like dogs on a lead,

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[2] Karl-Heinrich Bette, "Ein Jahr im Heldenkosmos", in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* from 24.12.2009. *My translations.*

[3] Cf. Werner Faulstich, "Sternchen, Star, Superstar, Megastar, Gigastar. Vorüberlegungen zu einer Theorie des Stars als Herzstück populärer Weltkultur", in: ibid., *Medienkulturen*, München 2000, p. 204, with a reference to Knut Hickethier's essay: "Vom Theaterstar zum Filmstar" (1997).

[4] As far as I know, he was described in this way by Spanish author Manuel Vázquez Montalbán.

[5] Cf. Michael Eder, "Gegen Magier Zidane schrumpfen Brasiliens Stars zu Zauber-

not daring to attack the leader of the French pack because disgrace loomed hard on their heels, in both senses of the phrase) — these are all examples which present the star as an artist and expert, as a master of the rules, as a sovereign within his particular kingdom. In bourgeois language, the star represents the achievement principle. This is why the star, unlike the hero, has his place in the Modern age, the bourgeois age. It is through his achievements, *firstly*, that he distinguishes himself, makes his mark, creates a profile for himself. And in no other subsystem of Modern society is this principle so purely true as in professional sport, leading to a conflict here between the star principle and the hero principle.

But the artist-expert is nothing, is non-existent as a star if he only has a skill and does not in addition, *secondly*, stand on a stage. A so-called "achiever" who shies away from the media spotlight — a footballer with no inclination to play to a full stadium in front of the television cameras, a writer who refuses to give interviews and have his photo taken — does not have what it takes to be a star.[6] The age of technological reproducibility, of newspapers, photography, pictures in magazines, radio, film, video and ultimately the Internet, plays to this requirement. And, although stars undoubtedly have their own skills, with a view to their extreme dependence on publicity they also deserve the title *publicity parasites,* creatures which bury themselves in the multiple, pseudo-organic tissue called publicity. They only exist while this tissue is supplying them with attention, a process which only works, however, if they integrate themselves and *vice versa* feed the tissue. Stars, like heroes, embody something of a general nature, namely group-specific values and norms. Their success can be explained no other way. They are publicity parasites with a built-in symbiotic effect (combining skill and sociocultural integration).

And yet achieving on a stage is still not enough for a person to be awarded star status. As a final element it is also, *thirdly*, necessary to have something akin to an aura, or at least an image, its secular successor. Walter Benjamin defined aura as the localised and instantaneous appearance of distance, of an inapproachability in both a spatial and an epistemological sense, an untouchability and an inexplicability. Following his basic and

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lehrlingen", in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* from 3.7.2006.

[6] There are, of course, exceptions, Thomas Pynchon being a literary one. But the exceptions prove the rule.

thus rough categorisation, aura stems from the phase of culture steeped in tradition, originally formed in religion, ritual and cult and projecting through to the bourgeois age and its teachings on the autonomy of art. Film stars therefore cannot possess an aura, or at least not on screen.[7] If, instead, we adhere to the concept of image, then we can grasp the star simply as a person who has at his disposal a (characterising and exploitable) public persona. Since the 1960s, if not before, image has been closely connected with pop culture, with "pop" being whatever or whoever has an image, a consumable and correspondingly marketable self-image with a mass impact, primarily constructed from technically produced and aesthetically expressive ('loud') pictures.[8]

3. Philosophy of Presence

Sport has also been a starting point for a theorist who enjoys comparing the various arts, moving freely between literature, history and philosophy, and in so doing ignoring the petty distinction often made elevated and popular culture. The theorist I am referring to is Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, who is in the process — crucially in our context — of restoring a term which in the recent past — known as the Postmodern age — acquired a bad reputation: namely the term presence. Edmund Husserl first brought a certain level of significance to this term, conceiving of philosophy as phenomenology and presenting phenomenology as the science which grasps phenomena in their purity with an immediacy, in other words intuitively and apodictically or, more succinctly, in their 'presence'. Jacques Derrida then identified this manner of philosophical thinking with the entire Western way of thinking and discredited it as a "metaphysics of presence", as not paying or — with a view to Martin Heidegger — not paying enough attention to what is *not* shown. In contrast, what Derrida calls *différance* or "trace" refers to the permanent postponing of presence. *Différance* means neither presence nor absence, but precedes this relationship of opposition. This pattern is followed by the now sufficiently familiar de-

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[7] Cf. Walter Benjamin, „Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit", in: ibid., *Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. I.2: Abhandlungen*, Frankfurt/M. 1974, p. 492, cf. p. 479 ff., 489.

[8] Cf. Thomas Hecken, *Pop. Geschichte eines Konzepts*, Bielefeld 2009.

constructivistic language game.

Whilst a game, this linguistic game does have a serious core. Restoring the concept of presence today is impossible without a reference to Derrida's, as well as Hegel's arguments against theories of immediacy. Gumbrecht repeatedly seems to wish to swipe away these arguments with one fell swoop. Then he repeatedly stresses, almost imploringly, that presence is concerned with a spatial and a sensual or physical, not a temporal and a mental relationship to things and events, with a primacy not of comprehensibility, but of tangibility.[9] But Gumbrecht knows, of course, that initially he is only lending language to a "desire" for immediacy, and by no means already to proof of the same.[10] In philosophical terms, this desire is in strong contrast to Hegel's criticism of "sense-certainty" as a type of immediate knowledge which doggedly adheres to a deictic reference to the "this", "here" and "now", and yet which repeatedly proves to be something "mediated", necessarily linked to what it is excluding. Correspondingly, Gumbrecht also states that the immediate only *appears* to be given prior to every mediation, presence only *appears* to be given prior to every interpretation, that one "ultimately" has to "oscillate" between presence and interpretation and bear out a "tension" between the two.[11]

Admittedly, the question still remains of how this tension may be described more precisely: with a relative primacy of one side or as equally balanced. In order to gain more clarity, Gumbrecht seeks support from Martin Heidegger, the latter having made some more or less convincing proposals for how to leave behind the old paradigm of subject-object thinking influenced by Descartes. In his pioneering work *Being and Time*, the counterproposal is "being-in-the-world" of the "being-there". Of course, the spatial-deictic "there" in "being-there", with which Heidegger describes human existence, plays to Gumbrecht's needs. And yet it is rather astonishing that he refers to Heidegger so unreservedly when, in that phase of his work, the latter made the *hermeneutic* transformation of phenomenology his concern. He wanted to show that the asserted, direct perception of

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[9] Cf. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence. What Meaning Cannot Convey*, Stanford University Press 2004, p. XIII.

[10] Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, l.c., p. XV; for Hegel cf. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Transl. by A.V. Miller, Oxford University Press 1977, pp. 58.

[11] Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, l.c., p. XV, 77, 116.

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phenomenology can be replaced by understanding, where understanding means seeing something 'as' something, seeing something *pre*-predicatively and, to this extent, more fundamentally than seeing only predicatively, seeing something as 'meaningful'. In *Being and Time*, understanding thus constitutes the Being of the being-there. Instead of a subject observing objects, we now have an understanding existence (or being-there) within a symbolically structured world. Being-there is that particular form of being which is concerned with its own being, i.e. which can *have a relationship* to its own being (in German: a "Selbstverhältnis" where you can hear the word "sich verhalten", to behave). Its understanding of itself is *practical*. Thus being and (prepredicative) meaning are identical. One cannot separate it from the hermeneutic act of understanding, yet this understanding precedes not predicatively, but practically. This is how the oscillation between meaning and being presents itself in Heidegger's early works. Practice is accorded primacy.

Gumbrecht also refers to Heidegger's later works, primarily to his *Work Of Art* essay. Here the concept of being, as an occurrence, of truth is central. Accordingly, truth is "something that happens" in the sense of a double movement of un-concealing and hiding. In the background is Heidegger's famous and still controversial etymological interpretation of the Greek term *aletheia* as un-concealment. He uses it as a contrast to the corresponding term of truth, according to which a statement is true if it 'equates to' reality or is 'in agreement' with it. Whereas in his earlier works Heidegger emphasises the active, the un-concealing side of truth, the "disclosure" of a situation, in his later works an equality between un-concealing and hiding emerges. Heidegger's concept of truth may be notoriously underdefined as far as criteria for testing the truth are concerned, but if this concept of truth is interpreted in the context of constructivism and culturalism, then its justified concern becomes understandable. In order, namely, to be able to experience something (in its being), one has to identify it as *a thing*, as a something, and that means being able to lift it out of the continuum of empirical flow. This constructive identification takes place through practical or linguistic reference. Since both reference forms are culturally defined (albeit not necessarily determined), the being of things and events can only be stated *within* a cultural semantics. The being which we mean when we speak of an (indefinable, only to be expe-

rienced with the senses and the body, immediate) presence can only be located *outside* this area. In his *Work of Art* essay, Heidegger describes this tension as the "striving" between "world" and "earth", between what is clearly the semantic context and what refuses to have any semantic assignation at all. It is this tension which allows us to grasp why an attempt to say the truth about something has to be a continuing double movement: into the area of culture, its practices and linguistic forms, and back out again.[12] In this case the oscillation between inside and outside, sense and presence, is strictly paritetic.

Gumbrecht seems to be undecided about whether the tension existing in presence should be interpreted paritetically or practically. In this context it is also interesting that a philosopher and political opponent of Heidegger such as Adorno should struggle with the same problem. With his theory of the "preponderance of the object", Adorno attempts to answer in his own way the question of how being, now answering to the name "nonidentical", can be brought to bear in the midst of identifying thought.[13] And with this theory he makes it clear that, despite all the mediation, despite the irrefutability of the theory that there can be no immediacy, it is *not* enough to content oneself with a *parity* between the two poles. The sense of oscillation between sense and presence is, far more, presence.

4. The Aesthetics of Presence: Gesture and Fiction

The link between a philosophy of presence, sport and media presentation is now obvious. Being at a sporting event, even participating in one, following a football match live in a stadium or on TV, even playing oneself — this is a prime example of the lived experiencing ("Erleben") of presence, Gumbrecht's preferred term. For in such cases, as in all cases of intense participation and enjoyment, we totally immerse ourselves in what is happening. In games in general, and sport in particular, presence is accorded primacy over sense.

Admittedly, this primacy is not without its restrictions. Firstly, total immersion in what is happening thrives on the memory of what has already

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[12] Cf. Gumbrecht, *The Production of Presence*, l.c., pp. 69, pp. 74.
[13] Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, transl. by Dennis Redmond, posted online 2001, pp. 183.

happened, as well as the hope of what could still happen. The past and the future cannot be separated from the present in the case of enjoyment either. As spectators, as (surrogate) members of the team, we enjoy what is happening all the more when we are aware of the time factor. The 89th and 90th minutes of a football match, for example, heighten the intensity of the experience, or at least they do if the match is not yet decided, if it could still twist towards a positive outcome, towards a victory or at least away from an embarrassing defeat. Experiencing the present requires time in its three pertinent dimensions. And the intensity of the experience thrives on the extension of time.

Secondly, and more important, the presence of stars (who sometimes turn into heroes) on the pitch, TV or cinema screen can also assume a different quality, for example an *aesthetic* one. An aesthetic experience of presence is different and more than (just) the experience of presence. One could describe the public spectacle of modern sport lapidarily as follows: "This is not art and should not be art; it does not have any meaning and should not have any." Aesthetic experience, lived experience or "aesthetic perception" — the term preferred by Martin Seel — is concerned, in contrast, not just with becoming involved in the present, in what is happening at each moment, but also with the "consciousness" (or — a Kantian equation — the "intuition") of a present.[14] Aesthetic experiencing of presence accordingly takes place at an additional second level, a meta-level. It materialises in parallel to the present, so to speak, and this can happen gradually or abruptly. In the language of classical aesthetics, this can be an occurrence of beauty or sublimity.

To give an example: When, in the World Cup final four years ago, Zidane brought down with a header a player from the opposing Italian side (his name went in one ear and out the other), the impact of the blow was also that of experiencing: a rip through the present which was mirrored in the unbelieving looks of the spectators and the confused barrage of questions that followed: 'What was that?' 'Did I see what I think I saw?' 'Did that really just happen?' In order finally, when the truth was irrefutable,

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[14] Martin Seel, *Aesthetics of Appearing*, transl. by John Farrell, Stanford University Press 2005, p. 136 & 137. — Kant also, under the umbrella term "contemplation", equates intuition and consciousness or reflection, cf. *Critique of Judgment*, transl. by Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis/Cambridge 1987, §§ 2 & 5.

to follow up with the big why: 'Why did he do it?' Each question was like a catapult, shifting the entire situation, in a staccato rhythm and in one fell swoop, into a situation of the sublime. At this moment Zidane turned from a star into a hero. Not only did he apply the rules of the game like a true master, but he breached them like one, too. And that is one of the characteristics of heroes: they often breach rules, making them dangerously similar to criminals. That is why our feelings towards them are often ambivalent; we not only admire them, we fear them as well.

A specific descriptive category for phenomena of aesthetic presence was recently proposed by the German literary scientist Karl Heinz Bohrer. Turning critically against my analysis of film as an "allegory of modern subject theory", according to which certain genres (the western, the detective story and the science fiction film) become readable, so to speak, as expressive forms of the figure of the hero in Modernity, that is a non-uniform stratificatory Modernity (for, asked what is so fascinating about these genres, I reply: it is the fascination of the self, of the self in the dimension of its threefold differentiation, namely classic, agonal and hybrid), against my philosophical-theoretical approach then, Bohrer, in a pertinently familiar manner, insists upon the aesthetic intrinsic value of the figure of the hero, upon his "fictionally aesthetic status", upon his "character of appearance and presence", as even Bohrer now says.[15] In order to make this more comprehensible, he concentrates in his analysis of the western on the formal aspects of the ritual (duel) and the gesture (walk). He is thus able to identify Henry Fonda's "striding", John Wayne's "rushing forwards" and Robert Mitchum's "swagger".

Emphasising the movement styles and gestures of actors in order to explain their screen presence is certainly an obvious thing to do. For presence phenomena — and here I have to agree with Gumbrecht — are bound to the physicality of the phenomena, in this case to the manner of moving and using one's body. Yet both philosophically and aesthetically, a *formal* analysis of gesture goes further. Such an analysis has been presented in the ontological-hermeneutic tradition by the art historian Gottfried Boehm, entitled *Hintergründigkeit des Zeigens*. According to this analysis, gestures

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[15] Karl Heinz Bohrer, "Ritus und Geste. Die Begründung des Heldischen im Western", in: *Merkur.* special issue: *Heldengedenken. Über das heroische Phantasma*, 63rd year (2009), issue 9/10, p. 944 f.

of showing take place against a background which lends them meaning, and this background is the "physical flow of movement" or the "posture, the *tonos* of the body", a state of tension or relaxation which, like tone in music, tone of voice or a social tone of behaviour, cannot be semantically nailed down, but on the contrary *"grounds"* each individual meaning. In a formulation which would probably please Gumbrecht, Boehm writes: Each individual act of showing "comes from the *pointless (deutungslosen) off* of a bodily presence", whereby, once again, the body is not identical to its materiality, but implies a state of tension, an "energetic dimension".[16] I personally prefer a different formulation: "What gestures *show* never completely lives up to what they appear to *say*. For the overhang of the body brings tone, timbre, rhythm, flair into play".[17] One might also say: the overhang of the body brings the *aesthetic* into play. Because the aesthetic in my view *is* the somatically triggered and at the same time (on the meta-level) consciously (i.e., an intuitive consciousness) accompanied or viewed *interplay* of tone, timbre, rhythm, flair. Put the other way around and more precisely: the interplay of tone, timbre, rhythm, flair, at the basic level of perception, that of *aisthesis*, fulfils a central and original Kantian definition of the aesthetic in a *specific* sense, namely that of the interplay arising from a relationship of tension. The floor, the grounding of gestures of showing is thus not solid, but moving, a movement which results from relationships of tension.

Admittedly, at least one additional characteristic is required in order to define the aesthetic in a specific sense: that of the *fictitious*. But of course, this characteristic can be applied only to fictional heroes. With a view to presence this is what actually constitutes the state of tension: that which shows itself in a striking presence — the hero on the movie screen — is at the same time not real, and is playing a game with this state of tension. A central element of fiction is, after all, that of deception and pretence. This has led to its permanent denunciation from a moral standpoint. However, in the 18th century, a diversification could be observed between a fiction which hides the fact that it has been created and thus deceives, and a fic-

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[16] Gottfried Boehm, "Die Hintergründigkeit des Zeigens. Deiktische Wurzeln des Bildes", in: ibid., *Wie Bilder Sinn erzeugen. Die Macht des Zeigens*, Berlin University Press 2007, p. 23 & 24 (*my translations*).

[17] Boehm, "Die Hintergründigkeit des Zeigens", loc.cit., p. 27.

tion which asserts itself as an entity in its own right, beyond the alternative of true and false.[18] This right can be asserted within the framework of a scientific methodology or the framework of art, in particular literature. In the one case, the fiction can be interpreted as a hypothesis, as a statement principally capable of being true, but not (yet) valid as true. In the other case, that of (the art of) literature, the rules of reference and of illocutionary, communicatively binding power are suspended — to use the language of linguistic analysis — which in turn means: brought into a state of *suspense*, of tension.[19] In this case a statement, paradigmatically a metaphorical description, is not valid as true either, but is principally capable of being true, namely, in Heideggerian terms, of opening up a field of truth, of introducing a new candidate for (literal) truth, leading to a shift in our previous convictions.[20]

There is another, self-referential concept in which fiction refers to itself, in other words does not conceal the fact of its creation. Insofar it can plead a claim to truthfulness. But inherent there can be another claim, as well, namely the one that this fiction is more than mere fiction, thus, that it is able to become true (in a literal sense) in course of time. Finding out that inherent claim, however, needs another experience, an experience of evidence, and evident is what is understood in its own right. This concept was elaborated in the works of Hegel and Adorno, but can in part also be

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[18] Cf. Karlheinz Stierle, Art. "Fiktion", in: *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe, Vol. 2: Dekadent bis Grotesk*, ed. Karlheinz Barck et.al., Stuttgart 2000, p. 410.

[19] Cf. Gottfried Gabriel, Art. "Fiktion, literarische", in: *Enzyklopädie Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie 1*, ed. Jürgen Mittelstraß, Mannheim/Wien/Zürich 1980, p. 649; cf. also Jürgen Mittelstraß, Art. "Fiktion", ebd., p. 648.

[20] Cf. Richard Rorty, "Philosophy as science, as metaphor, and as politics", in: ibid., *Essays on Heidegger and Others. Philosophical Papers Vol. 2*, Cambridge University Press 1991, pp. 12: "There are three ways in which a new belief can be added to our previous beliefs", namely "perception, inference, and metaphor." An example of the first way our convictions can be changed: "I open a door and see a friend doing something shocking". An example of the second way: "If I realize, through a complicated detective-story train of reasoning, that my present beliefs entail the conclusion that my friend is a murderer, I shall have to either find some way to revise those beliefs, or else rethink my friendship." An example of the third way: "The first time someone said 'Love is the only law' or 'The earth moves around the sun' the general response would have been 'You must be speaking metaphorically'. But, a hundred or a thousand years later, these sentences become candidates for literal truth."

found in the works of Kant.[21] As fictions, thus, the products of art have an ambiguous status. They *cause* something prima facie to be *experienced* as real and true which is *not* real and true. In Kantian terms, they have the status of the as-if which is based on a game of opposites. They are made and yet true, and that means: although they make it clear that they are not true, just mere fictions, they manifestly appear as if they were true, as if they were real.

Regarding the figure of the hero in particular, this ambiguity is aptly demonstrated by heroic appearances on the cinema screen. My favourite film in this context is Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, a western which — yet again — maintains the tension between de- and remythologisation, which exposes the supposed truth of all the stories told by heroes and dictated to the authors of dime novels as mere boasting, exaggeration and falsehood, and yet at the same time is well aware of just how much the hero and the storyteller, the go-getter and the intellectual, need each other — a film then, which eternally damns the hero to the screen and which manages to give this figure back its metaphysical power, yet which does not attempt to deny that it is based on a cultural construction. The presence of the hero on the screen is ambiguous: transparent in the fact of its creation and oppressive in its evidence. It is full of tension, in both a naive sense of excitement and a reflected sense, as tense as the structure of the aesthetic and as exciting as a great football match.

Translated into English by Sarah L. Kirkby

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[21] On Hegel cf. his *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art*, transl. by T.M. Knox, Oxford 1988, p. 9: "the pure appearance of art has the advantage that it points through and beyond itself" and therefore "does not present itself as deceptive". On Kant cf. his *Critique of Judgment*, l.c., § 51: "The poet ... promises little and announces a mere play with ideas ...". On Adorno's concept of evidence cf. Herbert Schnädelbach, „Dialektik als Vernunftkritik. Zur Konstruktion des Rationalen bei Adorno", in: L. van Friedeburg/J. Habermas (Hg.), *Adorno-Konferenz 1983*, Frankfurt/M. 1983, S. 72 ff. A self-referential concept of the aesthetic (but without a corresponding concept of evidence) is presented also by Roman Jakobson (*Linguistics and Poetics*, 1960) and Arthur C. Danto (*The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, 1981).