

# Imaginative Disclosure: Adorno, Habermas, and Artistic Truth

LAMBERT ZUIDERVAART, *Institute for Christian Studies (Toronto)*

All aesthetic questions terminate in those of the truth content of artworks.

—Theodor W. Adorno

The aesthetic 'validity' ... that we attribute to a work [of art] refers to its singularly illuminating power ... to disclose anew an apparently familiar reality.

—Jürgen Habermas<sup>1</sup>

The idea of artistic truth is a crossroad for third-generation critical theorists. Few ideas were more crucial for Theodor W. Adorno's negative dialectic, arguably the most important philosophical contribution to critical theory by the first generation.<sup>2</sup> Yet it finds no place in Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, the dominant paradigm among second-generation critical theorists. The divergence of paths between "Adornians" and "Habermasians" in the third generation cuts directly through this idea. A scholar who thinks both sides have important insights on the topic faces an apparent dilemma. If one tries to retrieve Adorno's intuitions about artistic truth, one runs the danger of becoming unintelligible to postmetaphysical theorists. Alternatively, one can soldier on using Habermasian concepts, and risk losing the critical-utopian import of Adorno's negative dialectic.

Kant famously suggested in a very different context that concepts without intuitive content are empty, and intuitions without concepts are blind. Adorno would add, in a Hegelian critique of Kant, that neither intuitions nor concepts can be pure.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, one might be able to mediate the apparently incompatible positions of Adorno and Habermas and, modifying both sides, to develop a fruitful account of artistic truth. That is what this essay attempts, drawing upon a larger study of the idea of artistic truth.<sup>4</sup> First the essay reviews Adorno's idea of artistic truth content (*Wahrheitsgehalt*) in light of Habermasian concerns about a general conception of truth. This leads me to describe artistic truth as a process of imaginative disclosure (section 1). I then propose a three-dimensional approach to the idea of artistic truth (section 2). My approach tries to combine the best insights of Adorno and Habermas, but in a language that does not merely derive from either one. The final section (section 3) explores correlations between the three dimensions of imaginative disclosure and three validity dimensions in art talk and, more generally, in communicative action.

### Critical Aesthetic Theory

The divergence between Adorno and Habermas in matters aesthetic replicates a larger divergence in their general conceptions of truth. Whereas Adorno regards truth (*Wahrheit*) as an "emphatic idea" whose content exceeds propositional articulation in a "false" society, Habermas regards it as a dimension of propositional validity anchored in the structure of linguistic communication. For Habermas, truth properly so called is propositional, and the other dimensions of validity are at most analogous to propositional truth. Although Adorno does not dismiss questions of propositional validity, he does not make them decisive for truth. Instead, like Heidegger and Hegel, but in his own negative dialectical way, Adorno regards truth as a process of disclosure in which art plays an important role. Conversely, although Habermas does not dismiss questions of disclosure, especially as they pertain to how ordinary language opens up new perspectives on the world, interpersonal relations, and oneself, he makes such questions subservient to questions of propositional, normative, and expressive validity.

Not surprisingly, links between validity and disclosure have become central concerns for third-generation critical theorists. The Adornians among them challenge Habermas's account of validity, and they return to Adorno's emphasis on "the nonidentical."<sup>5</sup> The Habermasians, by contrast, accept Habermas's account of validity, but they worry about his relative neglect of disclosure. Their worries take them in two different directions.<sup>6</sup>

On the one hand, theorists such as Martin Seel and James Bohman insist on the propositional character of truth and portray disclosure as an enabling condition for propositional truth. Seel, for example, regards world disclosure as a change in already existing orientations "regarding the right and the true."<sup>7</sup> This change unsettles a linguistic community's relationship to its social and objective worlds. Bohman says that world disclosure occurs within the discursive testing of validity claims, such that the "radical critic" can help "change the relation of the hearer to the social world."<sup>8</sup> Neither Seel nor Bohman seems content with the utopian impulse that second-generation critical theorists retain from Adorno's truth aesthetics, even though Wellmer and Habermas have channeled it into the search for an "inner-worldly utopia."<sup>9</sup> Whereas Seel rejects Habermas's identifying the artwork's "singularly illuminating power" with the work's "aesthetic validity,"<sup>10</sup> Bohman questions whether artworks even have this disclosive power.

On the other hand, while accepting the propositional character of truth and distinguishing truth from disclosure, Nikolas Kompridis argues that world disclosure and validity-oriented action are interdependent. As a process of discovering meaning, and especially as a process of creating meaning,<sup>11</sup>

world disclosure has "potential truth-effects" that require validity-oriented reconstruction. This is especially important, he says, for the practices of "creative democracy."<sup>12</sup> Art has something special to offer in this regard. Hence Kompridis seems more attuned to Adorno's utopian impulse, even though he does not limit it to the artwork's "singularly illuminating power."

Neither approach, neither the validity-oriented emphasis of Seel and Bohman, nor Kompridis's meaning-creative account, provides an adequate basis for a theory of artistic truth. The reason is quite simple. In tying truth so firmly to propositions, whether by enthusiastic affirmation or by reluctant concession, third-generation critical theorists lose Adorno's insight into the nonpropositional character of artistic truth. Moreover, because they turn disclosure into an inner-worldly process whose validity must be discursively secured, they do not ask whether, and in which respects, propositional truth itself derives from a process of disclosure that exceeds contemporary societal horizons.

These tendencies become particularly evident in the writings of Martin Seel, who has worked out a detailed conception of aesthetic validity. His essay "Kunst, Wahrheit, Welterschliessung" ("Art, Truth, World Disclosure")<sup>13</sup> credits traditional "truth aesthetics" with correctly intuiting that a distinctive validity clings to artworks and to evaluations of their merits. Yet this validity is not a matter of truth, properly speaking, but one of aesthetic validity, he says. Whereas "truth" (*Wahrheit*) pertains primarily to the theoretical validity that attaches to assertions (*Aussagen*), and "appropriateness" (*Richtigkeit*) pertains primarily to the practical validity of actions or maxims, "aesthetic validity" (*ästhetische Geltung*) pertains primarily to the success of cultural modalities of perception.<sup>14</sup> Aesthetic validity is distinct from both theoretical and practical validity. In each zone, however, claims to validity are made and tested by maintaining (*Behauptung*) and confirming (*Bewahrheitung*) assertions, whether these be theoretical, practical, or aesthetic.<sup>15</sup>

According to Seel, art's distinctive task resides in the "basic function of cultural perception."<sup>16</sup> Artworks are "*signs* of a specific view of the world" that "present human life-situations in their existential significance." They do this by making present (*Vergegenwärtigung*) (1) the significance of circumstances and events, (2) the construction of patterns and signs guiding human perception, and (3) the media and procedures supporting such significance (1) and construction (2). Most important, artworks do all of this by presenting (4) "the significance of artistic experience for human experience." Such a multifaceted and reflexive cultural perception is structurally constitutive for art and normatively central.<sup>17</sup> When artworks are aesthetically valid, they succeed in articulating cultural perception by reciprocally presenting both significance (1 and 4) and procedures (2 and 3). Such arti-

culative success is what art criticism should elucidate.<sup>18</sup> The reliability (*Verbindlichkeit, Gültigkeit*) of what an artwork presents, and the acceptability (*Akzeptierbarkeit*) of the modality of cultural perception the work articulates, should not be the focus of art criticism.<sup>19</sup>

In my view, Seel's efforts to define art's validity as aesthetic validity point to a deep source of tension, not only in his conception but also in much of Western aesthetics. A thoroughgoing conflict occurs between insisting on artistic autonomy, specified in terms of *aesthetic* criteria for *works* of art, and giving art an orienting role in society, a role Seel defines in terms of *existential* significance for *modalities* of cultural perception. Because of the way in which Seel ties art's orienting role to the articulation of modalities of cultural perception, all questions about the social significance and social merit of art's disclosure get reduced to questions about extra-artistic "effects" (*Wirkungen*). As a result, neither a social critique of art nor an artistic critique of society seems conceivable within Seel's framework. Artworks come to be considered successful just by virtue of articulating cultural perceptions, regardless of whether they endorse, question, or oppose those perceptions, and regardless of whether those perceptions deserve to be affirmed, challenged, or destroyed. He seems to have given up not only Adorno's utopian impulse but also the societal critique it sustained.<sup>20</sup> In fact, Seel's account of aesthetic validity precludes any idea of artistic truth. By circumscribing the theoretical validity of assertions as the sole domain of truth, he surrenders this idea. On his account truth can pertain to the practical and aesthetic domains only to the extent that value-assertions occur in these domains and become the topic of *theoretical* discussion. Hence we cannot properly speak about the truth of art as such, but only about the truth of certain assertions we make about art.

Seel tries to forestall this consequence. His proposal does not preclude having claims to truth arise in nontheoretical ways, he says, for "the value of truth presupposes the truth of [practical and aesthetic] values."<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, the cleverness of Seel's formulation masks an equivocation: whereas "truth" in the first phrase just quoted means theoretical validity, "truth" in the second phrase means nontheoretical validity, and nontheoretical validity cannot be truth, according to Seel's own distinctions. Moreover, Seel's methodological justification for restricting truth to assertions simply assumes systematically grounded answers to the methodological questions he avoids, such as why a focus on assertions should be considered elementary. Whether one calls it systematic or methodological, Seel's approach to artistic truth clearly privileges assertions, especially those that are empirically based. The phrase "artistic truth" becomes an oxymoron.

Of course, this would not count as an internal criticism of Seel's position, had he not set out to rescue "the correct intuition of all truth aesthetics" that art has a distinctive validity.<sup>22</sup> This intuition, as elaborated in a complex tradition stretching from Hegel and Nietzsche to Heidegger and Adorno, is not simply that successful artworks are articulate and articulated—a commonplace of post-Kantian aesthetics. Rather the intuition is that something like true insight, or revelation, or critique, can come to the fore within art itself, and that the emergence of such truth is crucial to an artwork's validity, including (but exceeding) what Seel identifies as an artwork's aesthetic validity. By reducing the intuition of "truth aesthetics" to a notion of aesthetic and nonaesthetic validity, Seel has given up the most provocative part of the tradition's intuition. In this essay he does not demonstrate why that part might deserve to be given up.

Even if one granted Seel's restriction of truth to assertions, a problem would remain. For if one distinguishes aesthetic validity from truth, and restricts truth to the theoretical domain, then a theory of connections between art and truth would require an account of relationships between the articulateness of artworks and the correctness of assertions about artworks. Such an account Seel does not provide, not even in a subsequent essay that makes art's role in world disclosure dependent on the formulation of "interesting [propositional] truth *about* the work of art."<sup>23</sup> Seel seems to assume that assertions about art are relatively nonproblematic, that one faces no unique challenges when trying to formulate claims about an artwork that are both "interesting" and correct. Yet such confidence is belied by the amount of ink spilled and computer memory used on precisely this topic since the 1950s. Distinguishing aesthetic validity from assertoric truth does not solve traditional issues of "artistic truth." It simply moves them to a somewhat different field.

Adorno was keenly aware of both sorts of tension—between truth and aesthetic validity, and between artistic and propositional truth. He clears away all remnants of logical positivism when he describes the truth content (*Wahrheitsgehalt*) of artworks as neither factual nor propositional yet perceptible and structural:

They have truth content and they do not have it. Positive science and the philosophy derived from it do not attain it. It is neither the work's factual content nor its fragile and self-suspendable logicity.... What transcends the factual in the artwork, its spiritual content, cannot be pinned down to what is individually, sensually given but is, rather, constituted by way of this empirical givenness.... [A]rtworks trans-

cend their factuality through their facture, through the consistency of their elaboration (AT, 128–9; ÄT, 194–5).

Can Adorno give a fuller, more positive, and general characterization of truth in art? In one sense he cannot, since he insists that the truth content of each artwork is unique to it and cannot be cleanly extracted from it: "The truth content of artworks cannot be immediately identified. Just as it is known only mediately, it is mediated in itself" (AT, 129; ÄT, 195). Yet Adorno's discussion allows for a number of additional characterizations, such as these.<sup>24</sup> (1) Truth in art has historical, societal, and political dimensions. Truth content is not a metaphysical idea or essence, for it is bound to specific historical stages, societal formations, and political contexts. (2) Truth in art is not merely a human construct, even though it would not be available in art were it not for the production and reception of particular works in specific media. (3) Truth in art emerges from the interaction between artists' intentions and artistic materials. It is the materialization of the most advanced consciousness of contradictions within the horizon of possible reconciliation. (4) Truth in art requires both the successful mediation of content and form and the suspension of form on behalf of that which exceeds this mediation. (5) Truth in art is nonpropositional, yet it invites and needs critical interpretation. (6) Truth in art is never available in a directly nonillusory way: "Art has truth as the semblance of the illusionless" (AT, 132; ÄT, 199).

On Adorno's conception, then, truth in art is carried by sociohistorical meaning or import (*Gehalt*) that emerges from artistic production, depends on the mediation of content and form, resides in particular works, transcends them, and invites critical interpretation. Perhaps not every work has truth content (*Wahrheitsgehalt*), but every work having import (*Gehalt*) calls for judgments about the truth or falsity of its import. In a sense, then, truth in art has a double location. First, it is located in the truth content of auto-nomous works of art.<sup>25</sup> The concept of truth content suggests that truth is *in* artworks and not simply prompted or denoted by them. Second, truth is located in a reciprocation between critical interpretation and art phenomena, a reciprocation that occurs by way of the truth content of particular works.

The advantage to Adorno's approach is twofold. First, it refuses to divorce truth from the phenomena of art, insisting instead that truth is thoroughly mediated by the phenomena. Second, it resists the philosopher's temptation to read into art whatever truth the philosopher wishes to find there. But this advantage comes with a double disadvantage. Not only does Adorno privilege autonomous art, specifically *autonomous artworks*, as the

site of truth in art, but also he privileges philosophy, specifically *negative dialectical philosophy*, as the most authoritative interpreter of artistic truth.<sup>26</sup>

Admittedly, it is difficult to give a philosophical account of artistic truth that does not fall into one of these two traps. Like Albrecht Wellmer, I have found Habermas's theory of communicative action helpful in that regard. So have Seel and other third-generation critical theorists, who simply follow Habermas's lead in retaining propositions as bearers of truth and turning the claim to truth into an intersubjective validity claim. Habermas regards the claim to truth (*Wahrheit*) as one of three validity claims for which every speaker is accountable when she or he uses language to reach an understanding. The other two validity claims are normative legitimacy or rightness (*Richtigkeit*) and sincerity or truthfulness (*Wahrhaftigkeit*).<sup>27</sup> The three validity claims correspond, respectively, to language's universal pragmatic functions of representing something in the world, establishing interpersonal relations, and expressing personal experience. In using language, speakers refer to things in "objective," social, and personal worlds.<sup>28</sup>

Because Habermas grounds his theory of validity in a reconstruction of social theory and of ordinary language, his approach privileges neither autonomous artworks as the site of truth in art nor philosophy as the most authoritative interpreter of artistic truth. His approach provides a worthwhile correction to Adorno's truth aesthetics. Unfortunately, it comes at the expense of nearly eliminating art's capacity to carry truth. At best, in a modification borrowed from Wellmer, Habermas accords artworks a "truth potential" as a singular power "to disclose anew an apparently familiar reality" and thereby to address ordinary experience, in which the three validity domains intermesh.<sup>29</sup> This account implies that art is not entirely locked up in an autonomous sphere of aesthetic validity overseen by professional artists and expert critics, that art can directly stimulate transformed relations among ordinary selves or between them and the world. Nevertheless, given the distance Habermas himself has pointed out between ordinary experience and the expert culture of the artistic domain, his appeal to artistic "truth potential" is not grounded in a social-theoretical account of how this potential could be actualized. Art's disclosive power seems to float free from society, unlike the critical and utopian role it receives in Adorno's aesthetics.<sup>30</sup>

This is not the place to give an extended critique of Habermasian aesthetics. Instead let me propose an approach to artistic truth that combines Adorno's insight into artistic "truth content" with Habermas's insight into the differentiated character of validity claims. I wish to consider artistic truth to be internal to art phenomena, as Adorno claims, yet differentiated into three dimensions, in a manner reminiscent of Habermas's

theory of validity. These dimensions can be understood either as three relationships that art phenomena sustain or as three functions they fulfill. Moreover, the prevalence of one or another dimension correlates with the historically conditioned status of the phenomenon, i.e., with whether it is institutionally constituted as a work of art.<sup>31</sup>

I propose that all the art we know of, whether "high" or "low," whether "popular" or "esoteric," whether "mass art" or "folk art," has as one of its tasks to proffer and provoke imaginative insight. To call insight "imaginative" in this connection is to suggest that it arises within intersubjective processes of exploration, presentation, and creative interpretation. Imaginative insight depends on the discovery and deployment of aesthetic signs.<sup>32</sup> In Western societies, art has become differentiated as a cultural domain where people continually invent and test media for such discovery and deployment. To be imaginative, the insight cannot be divorced from such media of imagination—images, stories, metaphors, musical compositions, dramatic enactments, and the like. To be insightful, the media of imagination cannot be deployed in either arbitrary or rigid ways. Perhaps, to avoid the static and visual metaphor of "insight," one should speak of imaginative inseeings, imaginative inhearings, imaginative intouchings, and the like. As a generic term I use the word "disclosure" rather than "insight."

In general, I regard truth as a process of life-giving disclosure marked by fidelity to the commonly holding-and-held. By "life-giving disclosure" I mean an historical process of opening up in which human beings and other creatures come to flourish. By "fidelity" I mean responsiveness to principles such as solidarity and justice that people hold in common and that hold them in common. These principles are historical horizons that are learned, achieved, contested, reformulated, and ignored.<sup>33</sup> Imaginative disclosure, as it prevails in art, is no less crucial to this general process than is the assertoric or propositional disclosure that prevails in academic disciplines. Propositionally inflected theories of truth mistakenly reduce disclosure to whatever can be asserted, and they reduce the marks of fidelity to criteria for assertoric correctness, whether these be criteria of correspondence, coherence, consensus, or pragmatic consequences.<sup>34</sup>

I take it that when people talk about truth in art, they refer to how art discloses something of vital importance that is hard to pin down. When philosophers disagree about how to theorize truth in art, their disputes usually concern what art does or can disclose, how this disclosure takes place, and whether this disclosure is important, legitimate, preferable, and the like. In general, art can be true in the sense that its imaginative disclosures can uncover what needs to be uncovered. Art can be false in the sense that its imaginative disclosures can cover up what needs to be

uncovered. Once we realize what is at stake in artistic truth or falsehood, it will not do to say, "This is merely imaginative; just playful or ironic or parodic exploration; the work of creative genius." Such special pleadings have the inadvertent effect of making art seem irrelevant or frivolous, as if imagination has little to do with life-giving disclosure. But it also will not suffice simply to attack disturbing art as "blatantly immoral" or "sacrilegious" or "repressive." Such hyperbolic accusations inadvertently make art seem more directly effective than the imaginative character of its truth or falsity permits, as if artistic disclosure is not tied to intersubjective exploration and interpretation.

Philosophers who reflect on contemporary art, and who engage in cultural and social criticism, must ask, What needs to be disclosed in an imaginative way? This is not so different from the question facing every truth-oriented artist. There is no way to answer the question once and for all, especially not when one is an artist, since that which needs disclosure is continually changing, as are the media of imaginative disclosure. In the broadest terms, a philosopher must appeal to a general understanding of good and evil. At various stages of social history one or another pathology may have priority. Hence, for example, Adorno may have been right to connect the truth of modern art with the memory of suffering and the exposure of antagonisms in a society that erases this memory and resists such exposure while suffering multiplies and antagonisms deepen. Nevertheless, where imaginative disclosure is genuinely needed, what needs to be disclosed cannot be limited to the truth content of autonomous artworks, nor can the identification of these needs be the sole prerogative of philosophy.

It is crucial, I think, that imaginative disclosure occurs in art itself, and not merely in people's lives when they experience artworks, talk about them, and engage in arts-related discourse. Yet I see little reason to restrict imaginative disclosure to the "import" of autonomous works of art. Art phenomena, whether or not they are institutionally constituted as works of art, occur in contexts of production and use. Accordingly, the idea of imaginative disclosure can be differentiated into concepts of mediated expression, interpretable presentation, and configured import. "Mediated expression" indicates a relationship to the context of production. It pertains to the phenomenon's status as an imaginative artifact. "Interpretable presentation" indicates a relationship to the context of use. It pertains to the phenomenon's status as an imaginative object of appreciation, commentary, and criticism. "Configured import," however, indicates the phenomenon's relationship to its own internal demands, and it may well be peculiar to artworks. In traditional terms, which Adorno also uses, import has to do with

how, within phenomena that are institutionally constituted as works of art, the relationship between content and form makes the work a self-referential symbol of something else.

This implies that an art phenomenon can be true in three ways: true with respect to the artist's intentions, true with respect to the audience's interpretive needs, and true with respect to an artwork's internal demands. In each way, as I shall explain, the art phenomenon's "being true with respect to" amounts to "being imaginatively disclosive of." Moreover, an art phenomenon succeeding in one or two respects can nonetheless fail in another, just as a well-formed speech act asserting a proposition can be inappropriate, or a genuine act of promising can lend itself to misinterpretation. I designate these three dimensions of artistic truth with the terms authenticity (*vis-à-vis* the artist's intentions), significance (*vis-à-vis* the audience's interpretive needs), and integrity (*vis-à-vis* the work's internal demands). Perhaps "great works of art" display all three of these and continue to display them in new contexts of use.

### **Authenticity, Significance, Integrity**

Each term—authenticity, significance, integrity—indicates a relationship within which or with respect to which an art phenomenon can be true. Because of these relationships, people in modern Western societies bring certain expectations concerning imaginative disclosure to their interactions with art and with each other within the domain of art. One such expectation is that of authenticity. Thanks to a complex sociocultural history that Charles Taylor and others have told,<sup>35</sup> both artists and their publics expect art to arise from art making that is authentic. To be authentic, writing or video making or choreographing must be true with respect to the artist's own experience or vision.<sup>36</sup> This does not mean that the art event or art product must be transparent in this regard. Sophisticated publics often prize a lack of transparency. Yet, no matter how obscure the artist's intentions may be, we unavoidably experience an art product as not only arising via art making from someone's experience but also imaginatively disclosing that experience to some degree. The expectation of authenticity is the expectation that art phenomena be true with respect to—imaginatively disclosive of—the experience or vision from which competent art making allows them to arise. Authenticity is a matter of mediated expression that is imaginatively disclosive.

Judgments concerning authenticity can occur instantaneously, but they are enormously complex. One complication arises because everyone who experiences an art phenomenon brings a socioculturally acquired and

personal sensibility concerning which experiences or visions are worth disclosing, and which would be better left undisclosed. Together with variations in preparation and ability for interpreting art in different media, this complication partially explains why public disputes about artistic authenticity become difficult to resolve, quite apart from the political and legal struggles in which they commonly occur. Celebrated cases of "arresting images"<sup>37</sup> in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s had conflicts among sensibilities at their core. Many also raised the question whether authenticity is itself a legitimate expectation, or at least whether art-in-public<sup>38</sup> is appropriately produced or experienced under the expectation of authenticity. The expectation has not disappeared, however, and I doubt that it will, so long as the Western artworld remains relatively intact.

Within that artworld we also expect art phenomena to be significant. "Significance" is not the same as "relevance," with which it is often confused. An art event or art product may be found relevant, in the sense that it addresses a timely issue or makes a direct connection with an audience's interests or concerns. But in itself that does not tell us whether it is also significant. To be significant, an art phenomenon must be true with respect to a public's need for cultural presentations that are worthy of their engagement. Artistic significance is, if you will, a quasi-normative expectation. People expect art to be "worth their while," and they criticize art that does not live up to this expectation.

This does not mean that all the members of a public have the same personal needs for cultural presentations, or that they either share or come to share the same communal need. Yet they do all expect a concert or mural or an event of performance art to be a cultural presentation that, for various personal and public "reasons," offers something that merits their attention. What is offered could be the sheer quality of the playing or the visual highlighting of a neighborhood's story or the provocative reenactment of a traumatic event. Amid the variety of responses, we cannot avoid experiencing art events and art products as offering something more or less significant. The expectation of significance is the expectation that art phenomena be true with respect to—imaginatively disclosive of—a public's need for worthwhile cultural presentations. Significance is a matter of interpretable presentation that is imaginatively disclosive.

This formulation suggests that art serves to bring to our attention interpretive needs that might otherwise remain hidden. Accordingly, it would be a mistake to think that artists should simply provide what audiences want or demand. It would also be a mistake to think that audiences have such well-defined needs that they always know beforehand "what they will like." My formulation also suggests a reason why straightforward political, moral,

or religious readings of the supposed "message" of an artwork tend to backfire. What such approaches miss is the reflexivity built into art interpretation and demanded by the imaginative character of art itself. When we interpret art we simultaneously interpret our need for what the art in question may or may not offer. This reflexivity does not preclude political, moral, or religious interpretations. Rather it encourages them, provided they remain open to having art challenge the self-interpretation that a community or social agent brings to the hermeneutic process. Art phenomena that deserve interpretation cannot shed the imaginative character of the cultural presentations they offer. That is why, as I suggested earlier, simpleminded attacks on disturbing art prove inadequate, quite apart from the rhetorical ineffectiveness of moral hyperbole in a pluralistic society.

When the art phenomenon is institutionally constituted as a work of art, the expectations of authenticity and significance usually accompany a third expectation, which I label "integrity." Integrity has to do with a peculiarity in how artworks function as aesthetic signs. In general, aesthetic signs function as presentations that make nuances of meaning available in ways that either exceed or precede both idiosyncratic expressions of intent and conventional communications of content. What aesthetic signs present is their purport. Their purport is about something other than the aesthetic signs themselves, something various interpreters can share and do share. Artworks, too, are aesthetic signs in all of these respects, but with a peculiar doubling that most other aesthetic signs lack. I mark the difference by reserving "import" for the meaning internal to artworks. Artworks usually present something else by presenting themselves, and they present themselves in presenting something else.

Adorno captures this doubling when he argues that truth in art requires both the successful mediation of content and form and the suspension of form for the sake of what exceeds this mediation. For an artwork's import to be true, the artwork must succeed in being fully about itself while also succeeding in not being only about itself. Or, in Heidegger's terms, the work's thrust (*Anstoss*) must be carried by a configuration (*Gestalt*) that allows the establishing not simply of tensions internal to the work but of a larger striving. I would put the matter like this: for an artwork's import to be true, the artwork must live up to its own internal demands, one of which usually is that it live up to more than its own internal demands. The expectation of integrity is an expectation that the artwork be true with respect to—imaginatively disclosive of—its own internal demands. Integrity is a matter of configured import that is imaginatively (self-)disclosive.

Much could be said about this third dimension of artistic truth, which artistic truth theorists from Hegel onward have emphasized. Let me simply

note that my formulation of the notion of integrity attempts to close a gap in Wellmer's conception between the artwork's "aesthetic validity" (*Stimmigkeit*) and the work's "truth potential" (*Wahrheitspotential*). I aim to close this gap without either letting aesthetic validity replace artistic truth, à la Seel, or falling into the "esoteric" conception of artistic truth that Wellmer criticizes in Adorno's writings.<sup>39</sup> The expectation of integrity does not restrict us to exploring a work's "potential" for disclosing something in our world on the occasion of our experiencing the work. The expectation is stronger than that. It requires us to interpret the work as itself "standing for," "representing," or "symboling" something, and to find clues to what the work is about not simply in our own experience or in conversations with others, but *in the work itself*—in the specific way it configures whatever it makes perceptible. At the same time, the expectation of integrity requires us to interpret this configuration as the work's way of telling us about itself. Moreover, the expectation requires us to take both interpretive paths simultaneously, and repeatedly, with respect to the same artwork, since the work's self-disclosing world disclosure is itself imaginative, enveloped in processes of exploration and creative interpretation.

My distinguishing three dimensions of artistic truth raises a question about how they intersect. Let me give two responses to this question, first with regard to the internal workings of art, and then with regard to art's "world relations." I discuss the first topic with reference to the notion of aesthetic validity, and the second topic with reference to the notion of cultural orientation.

Elsewhere I describe "aesthetic validity" as an horizon of "imaginative cogency" within which people employ aesthetic standards such as complexity, depth, and intensity. Aesthetic validity pertains to the cogency of exploration, creative interpretation, and presentation and, within these processes, to the imaginative cogency of aesthetic signs.<sup>40</sup> Although I refuse to restrict aesthetic validity to art, I do not deny that aesthetic validity is an especially prominent concern in art as an expert culture. I now wish to show how imaginative cogency provides a horizon within which authenticity, significance, and integrity intersect.

I have already indicated that all three are dimensions of "truth with respect to" in the sense of "being imaginatively disclosive of." While the idea of imaginative disclosure recalls Heidegger's anti-aesthetics, my three-dimensional account opposes his tendency to reduce validity to disclosure, both in his account of artistic truth and in his general conception of truth. On my own alternative formulation, any disclosive "creating and preserving" in art, and any judgments about artistic disclosure, must appeal to imaginative cogency as a principle of aesthetic validity.<sup>41</sup> Hence, what unifies



authenticity, significance, and integrity, beyond their all being modes of imaginative disclosure, is the requirement that they measure up to a principle of aesthetic validity—that they all occur within the horizon of imaginative cogency.

This suggests that the purported authenticity of a particular art product or art event is not self-contained. Along with the expectation that the art phenomenon imaginatively disclose the art maker's experience or vision comes the expectation that this disclosure be "original." Other things being equal, we properly prefer an art product that gives surprising and compelling expression to the artist's experience or vision, rather than one that fails to do this. Similarly, the perceived significance of a particular art phenomenon is not sufficient. The expectation that it imaginatively disclose the audience's need for worthwhile cultural presentations brings with it an expectation that this disclosure be "gripping," "inspiring," or "illuminating." Other things being equal, we properly prize an art product whose cultural presentation is provocative and telling, not one whose cultural presentation is insipid or trite. Again, the integrity of an artwork is open-ended. We normally expect more than the artwork's having configured import that is imaginatively (self-)disclosive. We also expect this doubled disclosure to be "unique" and "challenging." Other things being equal, we properly give sustained attention to an artwork whose internal demands are high, also with respect to living up to more than its internal demands. We properly give less attention to an artwork that "makes life easy for itself."

Further, in the case of artworks, as distinct from other art phenomena, questions about authenticity and significance necessarily lead to questions of integrity. For in the final analysis, our emerging interpretation of the artwork's import necessarily guides our interpretation of the artist's vision and of our own interpretive needs. The work uncovers facets of the artist's experience and the interpreter's situation *by* disclosing a world *in* disclosing itself. An artwork lacking integrity or having little integrity might also be less disclosive of personal and intersubjective worlds.

Matters stand somewhat differently with art products and art events that are not institutionally constituted as artworks, however. Such art phenomena need not have the doubling that characterizes import in artworks. Often, in fact, they lack this doubling. They do have aesthetic meaning, however, as does any nonartistic aesthetic sign. Sometimes this fact, plus a close proximity to artworks proper, may raise the expectation that they be imaginatively self-disclosive. But we also often "read" their nuances of meaning in less demanding ways, recognizing their disclosive character to be little more than an amalgam of authenticity and significance for which the question of integrity scarcely arises. This is how many people experience

so-called popular music and mainstream movies. Yet the boundaries between artworks "proper" and other art phenomena, being dependent on institutional constituting, are fluid. The fact that all aesthetic signs have purport provides a basis for more demanding interpretations of even the most occasional of art phenomena. The risk, of course, is that one looks for more in the product or event than its institutional constitution and internal configuration warrant. As some forays into cultural studies have inadvertently demonstrated, interpreting ephemeral art phenomena as if they were artworks occasionally manufactures silk purses from sows' ears.

The three dimensions of artistic truth also intersect in supporting pursuits of cultural orientation. "Cultural orientation" refers to how individuals, communities, and organizations find their direction both within and by way of culture.<sup>42</sup> Aesthetic processes of exploration, creative interpretation, and presentation lend nuance and vigor to this pursuit. Because the artworld has developed as an institutionalized setting for promoting aesthetic processes and adjudicating aesthetic validity claims, art has become a crucial site for aesthetically laden pursuits of cultural orientation. Art serves simultaneously to help people find their way in art and to find their way in aesthetic matters outside art. Beyond this, however, my critical interpretation of Heidegger's anti-aesthetics suggests that such art-supported pursuits lend themselves to larger processes of disorientation and reorientation. Although I am loathe to portray these as a world/earth striving in which the tension between sociocultural orientation and transhistorical pre-orientation gets disclosed, something like this must enter an account that aims to link artistic truth with truth as life-giving disclosure marked by fidelity to the commonly holding/held. How should this intuition be articulated?

One way is to reclaim Heidegger's insight that there is more to validity than intersubjective principles and validity claims. I would describe this "more" as a calling that comes to us from beyond ourselves and beyond the people and entities with which we have dealings. The calling, which occurs in the very holding of principles, urges upon us an orientation toward that which sustains validity and gives life. It reorients our worlds, by spanning them, by connecting them with worlds we do not inhabit, and by continually placing them in question.<sup>43</sup>

The worlds in question, both with respect to art and with respect to ordinary language, are of three sorts: personal, social, and postsubjective.<sup>44</sup> First there is a personal world, to which each individual has unique access. Mediated expression in art opens a window on personal worlds as they are inhabited by the makers of art, whether or not these are professional artists. An underlying assumption within our expectation of artistic authenticity is that art makers' worlds are, in some relevant sense, sufficiently like our own



personal worlds that we can learn from the expression of their experience and vision. We turn to mediated expression to gain cultural orientation, even when we recognize that, no matter how authentic the expression, it will never relieve us from finding our own way.

In fact, the more authentic the art product or art event, the more it will push us to come to terms with a second world, the intersubjective or social world, which Habermas describes as "the sum total of legitimately ordered interpersonal relations."<sup>45</sup> More specifically, the art phenomenon will challenge us to come to terms with interpretive needs that go beyond personal desires and preferences. Such needs belong to the fabric of a world we share with other people. Deep within our expectation of artistic significance lies the assumption that art can illuminate our shared interpretive needs and even transform them. We turn to interpretable presentations to find new ways or rediscover old ways of recognizing and meeting interpretive needs for cultural presentations. This, too, is a way to gain cultural orientation.

The import of artworks also has the capacity to wrench us free from both the personal and social worlds we already inhabit. It directs us toward yet another world, if you will, perhaps not an "objective world (as the sum total of what is or could be the case),"<sup>46</sup> but a postsubjective world of what neither is nor is not the case. This is another world, not in the sense that it excludes personal or social worlds, but in the sense that, though it may include them, it cannot be equated with them. It is what Nicholas Wolterstorff, under different ontological commitments from my own, might call "the world of the work," to which Adorno would immediately add that it is not simply the world of the work. It is not an entirely different world from that which discloses itself in ordinary language and to which speakers employing propositions refer. But it is a world whose disclosure via artworks is sufficiently different from what language discloses that one hesitates to call it the same world.<sup>47</sup>

Because artworks present themselves in presenting something else, they elicit from us interpretations that are not simply about personal or social worlds. Artworks elicit interpretations of themselves, of their configured import, and, in this, interpretations of that to which they point, which is more than the world of the artist or the world of the interpreter. In expecting artistic integrity, we also open ourselves to a world that is not completely our own, but that also cannot exist on its own. Although any art phenomenon can lend itself to larger processes of disorientation and reorientation, the doubling of import in artworks gives them special "truth potential" in this regard. That, I take it, is why artistic truth theorists from Hegel and Nietzsche through Heidegger and Adorno have singled out

artworks as sites of more-than-artistic-truth. For the configured import of an integral artwork unavoidably puts personal and social worlds in question. In that sense every such artwork can provide favorable conditions under which a world-crossing call can be heard. Yet this call does not require any artwork, no matter how important, nor does any artwork itself lie beyond the question whether it also contributes to a process of life-giving disclosure. Both Heidegger and Adorno were misdirected to suggest otherwise.

### Art Talk and Artistic Truth

My connecting artistic truth with world relations allows one to regard the three dimensions of artist truth as marking different "universal pragmatic" functions. Thus, for example, authenticity pertains to the expression of personal experience, significance to the establishing of intersubjective relations, and integrity to the presenting of a world, all within a process of imaginative disclosure. If this is right, then one can postulate more precise links between artistic truth and the sorts of speech acts that commonly occur when people engage in art appreciation, interpretation, and criticism—more precise than a diffuse entering into ordinary experience where three validity domains intermesh, as described by Wellmer and Habermas.

To indicate these links, I employ a distinction within "art talk" between "conversation" and "discourse." "Art talk" refers to all the various ways in which language is used in the experience of art. When it occurs in relatively straightforward attempts to reach an understanding, it can be called "art conversation." But when it becomes more reflective, and implicit validity claims become explicit topics, it can be called "art discourse."<sup>48</sup> I want to consider how art conversation makes the truth dimensions of art available for art discourse.

Conversations about art address, among other topics, the artist's intentions, the audience's interpretations, and the artwork's internal demands. These conversations shift readily across descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, and prescriptive registers. Frequently one discussion partner or another will find a particular art phenomenon lacking in authenticity or significance or integrity, saying this painting is not genuine or that piece of music does not do anything for me or that film is a piece of trash. If someone else disagrees, then the implicit expectations of authenticity, significance, and integrity can themselves become topics of discussion. Someone, for example, may ask why you do not find the painting genuine, or why you think it should be genuine, or what you mean by "genuine," and you might respond by appealing to some notion of authenticity. When, in

response to a question or challenge, you give reasons for your judgment and explain your criteria, your conversation tends to turn into discourse.

Art discourse does more than thematize the dimensions of artistic truth, however. It also thematizes the validity dimensions of art conversation itself. Hence the topic for discursive consideration might very well be not simply the authenticity, significance, or integrity of the art phenomenon but the sincerity, appropriateness, or correctness of a discussant's speech acts. Often, in fact, the topics of art discourse jump back and forth between artistic truth and conversational validity claims. I might assert that a painting by Norman Rockwell presents too rosy a picture of American family life. You might dispute my assertion and ask me to defend or explain it. I might reply by appealing to certain facts—the clean-scrubbed look of the children, the sentimental happiness of the dog, etc. You might grant these facts, but say they do not make up a rosy picture. Or you might grant that they make up a rosy picture, but deny that such a picture is too rosy. Very soon we would find ourselves discussing what Rockwell “was trying to depict” (intention) and how others have responded to this painting (interpretive needs). So it would go.

At a minimum, this dispute would have two inseparable and simultaneous poles: the painting's import and the asserted proposition. To reach an understanding concerning the first pole, we would need to look at the painting together and try to see “what the painting is all about.” To reach an understanding about the second pole, we would need to establish whether certain shared facts bear out the asserted proposition. If we had not both looked at the painting with an eye to its import, we would be hard pressed to find sufficient shared facts relevant to the disputed proposition. Facts are funded (not founded) by objects as experienced, even though, according to Habermas, facts play a role only in discourse.

Or, to use a different example, you might suggest that Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* is an artistic fraud. How could a genuine artist exhibit an ordinary urinal and expect art lovers to enjoy it as a work of art? A defender of Duchamp might reply that you obviously have not understood his intention. Duchamp was not asking anyone to enjoy this mass-produced fixture as a work of art. Rather, he was challenging an artworld that arbitrarily installs certain products as artworks and just as arbitrarily rejects others. You might entertain this suggestion but reply that Duchamp himself was acting in no less an arbitrary way, unlike a genuine artist. In response, your interlocutor might ask what prompts you to say what artists should or should not do. Are you an artist yourself? Pursued at sufficient length, a discussion along these lines would also raise questions about what *Fountain* “tells us” about the

artworld itself (import) and why anyone should find *Fountain* worth his or her while (interpretive needs).

As constructed here, the primary dispute would have two inseparable and simultaneous poles: the artist's intention, and the sources of a viewer's responses. To reach an understanding with regard to the first pole, the discussants must figure out, to the extent possible, what the artist “had in mind” and whether the displaying of *Fountain* achieved this intention. To reach an understanding about the second pole, they must establish “where they are coming from” and whether such autobiographical positioning authorizes their judgments. In considering the artist's intentions, they will also seek to establish the sincerity of their own responses.

Or, to take a third example, let us say Joyce and Rosa are talking about Käthe Kollwitz's *Saatfrüchte sollen nicht vermahlen werden* (*Seed Corn Must Not Be Ground*). Joyce might say she considers it a powerful twentieth-century protest against the human consequences of war. Rosa might respond that she finds the piece personally moving but ineffective as a protest. Joyce might wonder aloud how this piece can be personally moving but politically ineffective. Rosa might reply that it takes more than a print of a mother protecting her children to persuade power brokers to lay down their arms. Joyce might answer that such persuading is not art's task anyway. At least a gesture of protest can raise people's consciousness, and this piece certainly does that. “But,” Rosa might object, “what evidence is there that this piece actually raised or raises people's consciousness?” At this point the discussion would quickly turn to what *Saatfrüchte* is about (import) and what Käthe Kollwitz was trying to accomplish when she made it (intention).

A discussion along these lines can be highly instructive. Its primary focus is the social functions of the piece in question. But it also raises questions about the social status of claims made in this regard. Again, the disagreement has two poles: the work's significance, and the normative legitimacy of speech acts in which such claims arise. To reach an understanding about the first pole, the conversation partners need to sort out the roles such a work plays in people's lives. To reach an understanding about the second pole, they must explore the merits of their own political and ethical stances. Considering a work's social functions gives people an occasion to sort out their political and ethical differences.

I wish to postulate not simply a general connection between artistic truth and conversational validity claims, but more specific links between each of the three dimensions of artistic truth and each of the three validity claims: between artistic authenticity and expressive sincerity, between artistic significance and normative legitimacy, and between artistic integrity and

propositional truth. Moreover, the links are dyadic. In the first place, art conversations about artistic authenticity often raise a conversational claim to sincerity; frequently they address artistic significance by raising a conversational claim to normative legitimacy; and, when considering an artwork's integrity, they usually raise a conversational claim to propositional truth. In the second place, our experience with issues of authenticity, significance, and integrity in art, and our art conversation about these issues, are part of the hermeneutical matrix from which the content of the correlative validity claims arises.

My examples do not fully bear out such dyadic links, however. This is because I have reconstructed instances of art talk primarily in the mode of argumentation, where assertoric, descriptive, and other constative speech acts tend to dominate. Hence in all three examples it seems as if "what is really going on" is a dispute over claims to propositional truth: not only, for example, whether it is correct to say that the Rockwell piece paints too rosy a picture but also whether it is correct to say that Duchamp's *Fountain* is an artistic fraud or that Kollwitz's *Saatfrüchte* is a powerful protest piece. My reconstructions do not effectively capture the expressive and regulative speech acts that ordinarily occur in conversations about art, raising claims to nonpropositional validity.<sup>49</sup> Let me fill in the conversational texture to the second and third examples, beginning with the discussion of Duchamp's *Fountain*.

Expressive speech acts typically occur as first-person avowals or confessions. The reconstructed dispute about Duchamp's *Fountain* might have started with two people in a gallery or museum, one of them visibly upset, the other ironically distanced. Being upset, you might say "I hate this piece" or "I just don't get it" or, more maliciously, "This really pisses me off." Taking the stance of a formalist critic, your partner might ignore your comment altogether or declare it irrelevant. Or, adopting a therapeutic role, he or she might ask, "Do you want to tell me about your feelings?" But let us say the two of you are friends who are out for the day, and you respect one another's felt responses to art. Then a more likely reply to your comment might be your partner's own expressive speech act: "I don't hate it; actually, I find it rather funny." Or your partner might be so bold as to question your sincerity: "Do you really *hate* it? Aren't you exaggerating a bit?" Disputes about artists' intentions and the authenticity of art products arise most readily from expressive speech acts of this sort.

According to Habermas, the validity claim most prominently raised by expressive speech acts is a claim to truthfulness or sincerity (*Wahrhaftigkeit*) in the sharing of experiences to which the first-person speaker has privileged access. As he points out, the "warranty" (*Gewähr*) for expressive speech acts

concerns the consistency of the speaker's actions with what the speaker says.<sup>50</sup> If, for example, you had been a big fan of dada prior to expressing your hatred of *Fountain*, your partner might well question the sincerity of your pronouncement. The same would occur if one hour later you bought the piece for display in your home's atrium. Overlooking or discounting the importance of such speech acts has been a fundamental flaw in anti-intentionalist accounts of art talk such as Monroe Beardsley's. Anti-intentionalism, while salutary in other respects, has reinforced the cultural insularity of professional art making and art criticism. In the past, the official artworld in Western countries has deliberately discouraged or disallowed art talk in which expressive speech acts prevail.<sup>51</sup>

Let us now turn to the example involving Kollwitz's *Saatfrüchte* and imagine that the disagreement began with a regulative speech act. Regulative speech acts typically occur as requests or promises "employed in the attitude of the second person."<sup>52</sup> One person asks another to do something, or ego promises alter that ego will do something. Suppose Joyce is a patron, Rosa a curator, and they are brainstorming about an upcoming exhibition of antiwar art. Joyce asks Rosa to include Kollwitz's *Saatfrüchte*, but Rosa refuses this request. They agree on Kollwitz's stature as an important twentieth-century artist and on the formal merits of this piece. But they disagree in other respects.

Structurally, this case is more elaborate than the previous example. One motivation for Rosa's refusal could be that she does not consider the patron entitled to make this request. This could become a reason why, at the level of discourse, she challenges Joyce's political interpretation. If so, then a dispute about the work's political merits would be somewhat "beside the point." Instead they should discuss the proper roles of patron and curator in the formation of an exhibition at this museum. Alternatively, however, the roles of patron and curator could be well established and each party be within her rights in either making or refusing the request. Then each party's political interpretation of the piece would indeed be on the table. Political interpretations, like moral and religious interpretations, have the propensity to put each discussant's own social involvements at issue. Joyce and Rosa cannot simply bracket how they participate in political processes and with whom they associate politically. In questioning one another's political interpretation of Kollwitz's *Saatfrüchte*, they would also question the normative legitimacy of their own speech acts of request and refusal, not at the level of organizational policy, but at the level of sociopolitical engagement. At this level, the very acts of requesting and refusing inclusion of the piece are a political interaction. Here art talk as political conversation

gives rise to controvertible claims about the political significance of the artwork.

Habermas argues that the validity claim most prominently raised by regulative speech acts is a claim to rightness (*Richtigkeit*) with respect to normative expectations that both parties recognize. The warranty for regulative speech acts concerns a speaker's readiness to give reasons why the request or promise in question meets normative expectations that are themselves worthy of recognition. Two people trying to reach a decision about the appropriateness of an artwork or art event for a specific occasion already assume some standard according to which the artwork would be appropriate. That is why their art talk can easily shift from conversational uses of regulative speech acts to discursive thematizing of both their own entitlement to make or refuse requests and the social significance of the product in question. If, in the case of Kollwitz's *Saatfrüchte*, Joyce backs up her request by appealing to her own political orientation in order to claim that the piece has great political significance, then a shift to discourse will already have begun. It is a fundamental flaw in existential accounts of art talk such as Albert Hofstadter's to ignore or dismiss the importance of regulative speech acts. This simply reinscribes the privatizing of art interpretation that emotivists such as I. A. Richards had already encouraged earlier in the twentieth century.

The dyadic links I have illustrated are neither necessary nor exclusive.<sup>53</sup> Being highly fluid, art talk rarely follows the linear paths I have mapped. Indeed, people do not have to engage in either constative, expressive, or regulative speech acts, respectively, in order for the "counterparts" of artistic integrity, authenticity, and significance to be discussed. You or your discussion partner need not make a personal avowal in order to talk about an art product's authenticity, nor must one of you engage in a regulative speech act in order to discuss the product's significance. Yet my examples do suggest that art products resemble speech acts in the types of world relations they allow people to sustain—namely, relations to a postsubjective world, to a personal world, and to a social world. It is because of parallels in world relations that the dyads are neither simply occasional nor completely contingent.

Like speech acts, artworks are ways in which people address one another about something. In principle each artwork makes available all dimensions of artistic truth, regardless of which dimension stands out. When an artwork is highly "expressive" of its maker's experience, for example, this does not render the work's import or significance inaccessible or nonexistent, any more than a spoken avowal immunizes itself from concerns about propositional truth or normative legitimacy. But in artistic intersubjectivity

and reference, unlike "communicative action," imaginative disclosure prevails.

Thanks to parallels in world relations, and to loosely dyadic links between truth dimensions in art and validity dimensions in ordinary language, imaginative disclosure is neither esoteric (Adorno) nor peripheral (Habermas). Elaborated at greater length, my proposal could provide a way to build disclosure into the very fabric of communicative action, rather than relegating it to a preliminary stage within language usage. At least it would offer a different perspective on propositional validity, both by tying it more closely to imaginative disclosure than standard truth theories allow, and by indicating truth itself to be a multidimensional idea whose reduction to propositional truth leads to theoretical impoverishment and practical dead ends. Adorno's intuitions about artistic truth would not be blind, although to articulate them would require Habermasian concepts that are not empty. In this way the critical-utopian import of Adorno's negative dialectic would be preserved.<sup>54</sup>

lzuidervaart@icscanada.edu

## Notes

1. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 335; *Ästhetische Theorie*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, *Gesammelte Schriften* 7, 2d ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 498. Hereafter cited as AT and ÄT, respectively. Jürgen Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," in *Habermas and Modernity*, ed. Richard Bernstein (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 203.
2. My genealogy regards Adorno and Horkheimer as first-generation and Wellmer and Habermas as second-generation critical theorists. Whereas the first generation entered university shortly after World War I and the second generation shortly after World War II, the third generation entered university in the 1960s and 1970s.
3. "Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), A 51/B 75. For a reading of Adorno's response to Kantian epistemology that takes issue with Habermasian

criticisms of Adorno, see Ståle Finke, "Concepts and Intuitions: Adorno after the Linguistic Turn," *Inquiry* 44 (2001).

4. Lambert Zuidervart, *Artistic Truth: Aesthetics, Discourse, and Imaginative Disclosure* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

5. See, for example, the weight given to "fugitive ethical events" in J. M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Ethics and Disenchantment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and the notion of a "politics of the mimetic shudder" in Martin Morris, *Rethinking the Communicative Turn: Adorno, Habermas, and the Problem of Communicative Freedom* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001). I address the social-philosophical potential of Adorno's negative dialectic, in response to Habermasian criticisms, in "Metaphysics after Auschwitz: Suffering and Hope in Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*" (forthcoming).

6. I base my discussion on essays published in the *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* in 1993 and republished in *Thesis Eleven*. The essays are cited from the versions in *Thesis Eleven*, no. 37 (1994): Nikolas Kompridis, "On World Disclosure: Heidegger, Habermas and Dewey"; Martin Seel, "On Rightness and Truth: Reflections on the Concept of World Disclosure"; James Bohman, "World Disclosure and Radical Criticism." For a more extensive treatment of this topic, see Cristina Lafont, *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure*, trans. Graham Harman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

7. Seel, "On Rightness and Truth," 64.

8. Bohman, "World Disclosure," 91.

9. See especially pages 11–5 in Wellmer, "Truth, Semblance, Reconciliation: Adorno's Aesthetic Redemption of Modernity," *The Persistence of Modernity: Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics, and Postmodernism*, trans. David Midgley (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

10. Seel is especially troubled by the source for Habermas's identification—namely, the retention by Seel's own mentor, Albrecht Wellmer, of utopian elements in Adorno's truth aesthetics. See "Kritik der ästhetischen Utopie," the concluding subsection in Seel, *Die Kunst der Entzweiung: Zum Begriff der ästhetischen Rationalität* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985).

11. Kompridis distinguishes between "first-order disclosure"—the discovery of previously hidden horizons of meaning in the "already interpreted,

symbolically structured world" in which we find ourselves—and "second-order disclosure"—the creative introduction of new horizons of meaning that "can produce either *decentering* or *unifying-repairing effects*" ("On World Disclosure," 29–30). His essay concerns itself primarily with second-order disclosure.

12. Kompridis, 41–3.

13. Seel, "Kunst, Wahrheit, Welterschliessung," in *Perspektiven der Kunstphilosophie: Texte und Diskussionen*, ed. Franz Koppe (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991).

14. Seel, "Kunst," 39. Later the essay gives the following, more differentiated, description of the three dimensions of validity: theoretical validity concerns the truth of assertions, the existence of states of affairs, and the acceptability of assertoric systems; practical validity concerns the appropriateness of actions and norms, the acceptability of practical demands (*Aufforderungen*), and the legitimacy of social institutions; aesthetic validity concerns the beauty or success (*Gelungenheit*) of artifacts, the favorability of sensuous experiences (*Erfreulichkeit von Empfindungen*), and delight in a style of life.

15. Seel characterizes practical and aesthetic assertions as value assertions. Whereas a *claim* to validity is *raised and justified* by maintaining and confirming *assertions*, the *validity* of actions/maxims and taste/perception can be *thematized and shown* by maintaining and confirming *value* assertions ("Kunst," 39).

16. "Cultural perception" is a weak rendering of what Seel refers to as *Weltweisenwahrnehmung*, which could be translated either as "ways of perceiving the world" or "perception of worldly modes." Occasionally, I render this term as "modalities of cultural perception." I translate the closely related term *Weltweisenartikulation* (ways of articulating the world, or articulation of worldly modes) as "the articulation of cultural perception." *Welt* has the sense here of culture rather than nature. In addition to cultural perception, Seel's list of aesthetic functions includes aesthetic contemplation and the stylizing of human existence ("Kunst," 42–4). For a more extensive account, see Seel's *Die Kunst der Entzweiung*.

17. Seel, "Kunst," 44–6.

18. Ibid., 58–62.

19. Ibid., 66–71.

20. Elsewhere, I have tried to link aesthetic validity with cultural orientation in a way that avoids this consequence. See Zuidervaart, "Cultural Paths and Aesthetic Signs: A Critical Hermeneutics of Aesthetic Validity," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 29 (2003). Unlike Seel, I do not link aesthetic validity with cultural perception and its articulation, but with intersubjective processes of imagination. Nor do I share his tendency to restrict art's validity to its supposed aesthetic validity. Yet, like Seel, and unlike Habermas, I neither link aesthetic validity with sincerity (*Wahrhaftigkeit*) nor postulate that aesthetic validity can only be borne out by way of special "world-disclosing productions."

21. Seel, "Kunst," 41. Seel's attempt comes in response to the objection that his preliminary distinctions assign "systematic primacy to theoretical truth," making this the "fundamental paradigm of truth" (39–40). He even strengthens the objection by identifying sentences of perception (*Wahrnehmungssätze*, or "elementary sentences with an immediate reference to reality") as the primary candidates for truth among assertions (40). Seel replies that the primacy he gives to assertions is only methodological, not systematic. His proposal simply isolates an elementary understanding of truth that focuses on the making and justifying of assertions as such, he says, and this understanding can be assessed philosophically and expanded into a theory of meaning.

22. Seel, "Kunst," 36.

23. Seel, "On Rightness and Truth," 78. Seel is emphatic on this score. Earlier in the same essay he writes: "The fact that not every kind of knowledge *aims* at propositional truth does not entail that knowledge is not always mediated through the possibility of validating propositions.... Precisely this is the point that I would like to make against Goodman (and Heidegger): that there can be no knowledge that does not involve at least the *medium* of propositional truth. Even in the extreme case of art, we cannot gain access to the non-propositional aesthetic knowledge *through* the work of art without the medium of propositional knowledge about the work of art" (72–3).

24. Here I summarize parts of my detailed account in *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991). As one

would expect from a critical follower of Hegel and Marx, Adorno's characterizations are neither merely descriptive nor purely normative. They are simultaneously descriptive and normative.

25. Adorno's conception of the artwork's autonomy is dialectical, complex, and not easily summarized. Autonomy has to do with the work's relative independence in society and its lack of obvious social functions, such that in enacting self-criticism it can expose hidden "contradictions" in society. For a recent reexamination of this conception, see Zuidervaart, "Autonomy, Negativity, and Illusory Transgression: Menke's Deconstruction of Adorno's Aesthetics," in *Philosophy Today*, SPEG Supplement 1999.

26. I elaborate these observations and criticisms in *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*. See especially Chapters 8 and 9.

27. One motivation for Seel's account of aesthetic validity is to reject both Habermas's identification of expressive sincerity as a concept of validity and Habermas's tendency to link aesthetic validity with expressive sincerity. See Seel, "Kunst," 55–60.

28. Later in this essay I replace Habermas's term "objective" with the term "postsubjective," for reasons I shall explain. The notion of an "objective" world is particularly problematic when it comes to art, it seems to me, since much of what art is "about" is itself constituted within either personal or social horizons.

29. Habermas, "Questions and Counterquestions," 203. Habermas's revision of his earlier account of art comes in response to Martin Jay's essay "Habermas and Modernism" in the same volume.

30. The appearance of floating reflects Habermas's tendency to underestimate the disclosive functions of ordinary language, as Charles Taylor suggests in "Language and Society," in *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's The Theory of Communicative Action*, eds. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991). Despite granting Taylor the point that ordinary language can open up new perspectives on the world, interpersonal relations, and oneself, Habermas does not treat this as a central function of language. Rather, linguistic disclosure is a pre-staging, as it were, of the communicative action in which validity claims are raised. See Habermas, "A Reply," in *Communicative Action*. Note, for example, how little Habermas actually concedes to Taylor on pages 221–2.

31. I indicate the need to historicize the concept of "artwork" in my essay "Fantastic Things: Critical Notes Toward a Social Ontology of the Arts," *Philosophia Reformata* 60 (1995). My suggestions about artistic truth take up where the last page of that essay left off. To do justice to the historical character of art, I distinguish artworks from other art products. My most comprehensive term for the objects and occurrences people experience as art is "art phenomena." Within the category of art phenomena I distinguish "art products" from "art events." A piece of music or a novel would be an art product, whereas a recital or a public literary reading would be an art event. Western philosophy of art since Kant has concentrated on what I take to be a subcategory of art products—namely, artworks. Artworks are art products that have been institutionally constituted, within an "artworld," to "stand on their own."

32. For background to this notion of imagination as intersubjective processes involving aesthetic signs, see my essay "Cultural Paths and Aesthetic Signs."

33. I elaborate this general conception of truth, via a critical dialogue with Heidegger, in Chapter 4 of *Artistic Truth*.

34. The complementary mistake made by Heidegger's essay "The Origin of the Work of Art" is to turn all of disclosure into imaginative disclosure, of an ethically burdened sort, for which assertoric correctness has little purchase. See Zuidervaart, "Art, Truth and Vocation: Validity and Disclosure in Heidegger's Anti-Aesthetics," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28 (2002).

35. See especially Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) and *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

36. This experience or vision need not be merely personal, nor does it have to be construed in an individualistic manner, for reasons I explain in the essay "Creative Border Crossing in New Public Culture," *Literature and the Renewal of the Public Sphere*, eds. Susan VanZanten Gallagher and Mark D. Walhout (London: Macmillan Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

37. The phrase comes from Steven C. Dubin, *Arresting Images: Impolitic Art and Uncivil Actions* (New York: Routledge, 1992), which gives illuminating sociological accounts of several culture-political outbreaks.

38. As I shall explain in a volume on the politics and economics of the arts, I have coined the term "art-in-public" to encompass *public art* (art that is government-sponsored or government-owned), *publicly funded art* (art supported directly or indirectly by government agencies), and *publicly accessible art* (art whose exhibition or performance occurs in public spaces or public media). Depending on how one defines "indirect support" and "public spaces or public media," much of the art produced in North America today could be considered art-in-public, contrary to a still prominent myth that art is something made and enjoyed by individuals in the private domain. The term "art-in-public" implies a critique of the traditional public/private split that continues to inform many debates about the arts and their role in society.

39. See Wellmer's "Truth, Semblance, Reconciliation." I discuss Wellmer's "stereoscopic" reading of Adorno in Chapter 11 of *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory* and will not rehash that discussion here.

40. Zuidervaart, "Cultural Paths and Aesthetic Signs," 321–4.

41. Zuidervaart, "Art, Truth and Vocation," 165–70.

42. Zuidervaart, "Cultural Paths and Aesthetic Signs," 324–7.

43. Zuidervaart, "Art, Truth and Vocation," 160–1.

44. Here I follow Habermas, although I replace his notion of an "objective world" with the notion of a "postsubjective world."

45. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 25.

46. *Ibid.*, 25.

47. My book, *Artistic Truth*, discusses the ontology of worlds in two chapters on Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968) and Nicholas Wolterstorff's *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980). What I have stated here is a first sketch that requires greater elaboration.



48. For a more complex account, see the section on "Art Talk" in my essay "Cultural Paths and Aesthetic Signs," 327–32.

49. A similar tendency undermines the important criticisms Maeve Cooke directs at Habermas's account of normative validity claims. She confuses speech acts with validity claims, and she tends to equate validity claims with assertions about validity. In other words, her own analysis moves too quickly from the level of communicative action proper to the level of argumentation within discourse. See Maeve Cooke, *Language and Reason: A Study of Habermas's Pragmatics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 63–72.

50. "In general, obligations result from the meaning of expressive speech acts only in that the speaker specifies what his past or future behavior may not contradict. That a speaker means what he says can be made credible only in the consistency of what he does and not through providing grounds.... [Expressive speech acts] contain an offer to the hearer to check against the consistency of the speaker's past or future sequence of actions whether he means what he says." Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, 2 vols. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, 1987), vol. 1, 303.

51. Recently, this has changed—with a vengeance, one might say—thanks in part to the impact of new social movements and in part to narcissistic patterns imported from (pseudo)confessional uses of mass media such as talk radio, celebrity testimonials, and "reality" television.

52. Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 76.

53. Here I revise an earlier essay's suggestion that the dyadic links are necessary. See "Artistic Truth, Linguistically Turned: Variations on a Theme from Adorno, Habermas, and Hart," in *Philosophy as Responsibility: A Celebration of Hendrik Hart's Contribution to the Discipline*, eds. Ronald A. Kuipers and Janet Catherina Wesselius (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002).

54. This essay derives from Chapter 6 in my book, *Artistic Truth: Aesthetics, Discourse, and Imaginative Disclosure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). It is reprinted here with the permission of Cambridge University Press.