

## Review Essay

### *Artistic Truth: Aesthetics, Discourse, and Imaginative Disclosure*

LAMBERT ZUIDERVAART

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**T**his review essay has three sections: the first outlines the book's structure and content, the second describes Lambert Zuidervaat's unique hermeneutic theory of (artistic) truth, while the third section assesses the merits of his project, noting its accomplishments, shortcomings, and place within contemporary hermeneutics.

As the first annual Symposium Book Award winner for excellence in research in Continental philosophy, the first thing that should be said about this "Continental" book is that it is not exclusively Continental. While Zuidervaat makes a home for his examination mostly within the Continental tradition, more than one third of the text is devoted to Anglo-American reactions to (artistic) truth. Ignoring the book's central theme of artistic truth for a moment, which in itself is contentious enough, it may seem curious to some that Zuidervaat has gone to the trouble of creating a crossbreed text guaranteed to frustrate and confound virtually every reader. For the majority of readers, *Artistic Truth* will require a degree of leniency before one may follow Zuidervaat through the often very trying "dialectical twists and turns" of his journey (204). But despite this initial reservation, the reasons behind his mixed posturing are deeply hermeneutical and have provided a better book for being so. This is the first of two volumes aimed at a reconceptualization of philosophical aesthetics. The second volume, tentatively titled *Art Matters: Politics, Economics, and New Public Culture*, promises a social theory of the arts that will be open to both new forms of public art and older artistic practices, including those currently shunned by modern aesthetic theories. As a first step toward such a theory the current volume offers a critical hermeneutic approach meant to do justice to the arts in a meaningful way for a society-wide conversation.

In many circles today it has become a cliché to ask, What is truth? As Zuidervaat is well aware, the same is no less true in the field of aesthetics, which asks both, What is truth? and, May art have it? Moreover, it seems that anyone wishing to answer these questions must start anew each time. Those in the know typically have no canonical definitions, so their answers almost always fail to have ecumenical endurance, and even superficial agreement seems to turn into issues of debate for the next generation of aestheticians. Further, those who are unwilling to

regard either linguistic or conceptual truth as belonging to the arts—and they are great in number—often relinquish not just truth within art but most standards and criteria. Given this general ambivalence it should come as little surprise that few today are willing to claim there is something like truth “in” art or to argue that aesthetic experience is worth more than the extent to which it produces psychological effects in individuals. Zuidervaart is one of the few. As the title of the book implies, Zuidervaart does not believe the notion of “artistic truth” to be empty or illusory. He argues that the contemporary, albeit outmoded, form of philosophical aesthetics may, indeed should, be involved in a social dialogue since art serves an important role in the greater culture. Zuidervaart suggests at least two basic reappraisals necessary for a come of age philosophical aesthetics. First, it must accept that artistic truth possesses validity claims typically denied it, and second, it must accept the unique and indispensable importance of artistic truth in establishing cultural orientation, both of which may be considered knowledge claims in a broad sense.

As part of his panoptic philosophical project to offer “a more robust conception of artistic truth,” Zuidervaart believes it is essential to answer whether propositions are primary bearers of truth and whether correspondence theories supply primary criteria of truth (3). By placing these issues alongside questions of cultural orientation, aesthetic disclosure, and validity he hopes to arrive at a fuller and more accommodating notion of artistic truth. His conclusion is that artistic truth falls somewhere between the nonpropositional and the antipropositional as “truth with respect to” rather than “truth-about” or “truth-to” (212). To that end he develops his hermeneutic account of the sociohistorical situatedness of artistic truth as a three-dimensional process of imaginative disclosure. The force of Zuidervaart’s revaluation of aesthetics comes in large part through the scope and uniqueness of his approach, in which a new hermeneutic conception of the arts must interact with social theory, discourses on public art and cultural policy, and emerging fields such as communications and cultural studies. He believes that it is only through an open transdisciplinary dialogue that we may begin to answer such important and often ignored questions as: Do we or should we turn to the arts as a way of disclosing or bringing clarity to our way of life? What is the role of art and the artist in society? What is the correlation, if any, between the disclosure of artistic truth and its validity?

### **Aesthetic Transformations of Philosophy and Culture**

Comprising ten chapters divided into three more or less equal parts, “Hermeneutical Matrix,” “Constructive Clearings,” and “Linguistic Turns,”

*Artistic Truth* is a sincerely schizophrenic (σχίζω “to split” + φρήν “mind”) text. Inasmuch as it is a genuine conversation that willingly opens itself through exposure to others’ horizons, its method and message are far from monological. On the one hand, Zuidervaart develops and defends his own unique theory of artistic truth from within and beyond the confines of the seemingly impenetrable mass of traditional philosophical jargon on both sides of the invisible divide (Continental/analytic). On the other hand, a great portion of his efforts are devoted to carefully elucidating positions very different from his own, even ones he recognizes as incompatible with his project. The significance of this is that it makes his position that much clearer, but it is also a methodology that risks making the text unconvincing. Were it not for a sense that the author was seriously trying to evaluate each position on its own terms, one might simply assume he was using them as strawmen to bolster his own agenda. The great hermeneutical challenge that Zuidervaart has delicately met is to create an earnest sense of “crossing” (less so a bridging) of otherwise irreconcilable differences between the sometimes implacably hostile. To be sure, Zuidervaart’s own (Continental) loyalty to a critical hermeneutics of artistic truth persists throughout the text, yet his many fragmentary examinations that take readers from virtually every conceivable extreme of philosophical truth, despite its solid scholarly insight and depth, will leave some dizzy for the jostling. Even so, this is part of what makes *Artistic Truth* stand out in an area of philosophy with more than its fair share of texts with painfully limited horizons.

The first three chapters, “Beardsley’s Denial,” “Reciprocalations,” and “Kant Revisited” are meant to demonstrate the need for a reconstruction of artistic truth and to set the territorial markings for Zuidervaart’s own general conception that “is neither propositionally inflected nor a correspondence theory” (84). As largely survey chapters, Zuidervaart offers brief appraisals of Beardsley, Hofstadter, and Rapaport as they respectively inform the matter of (artistic) truth. These are followed by a constructive chapter on Kant, which is more of an introduction to Zuidervaart’s views elaborated in Chapters 4–6 than it is an exposition of Kant. It should go without saying that moving from Beardsley’s logical empiricism, which Zuidervaart refers to as “metacritical denial” or “anticognitivist metacriticism,” to Hofstadter’s “existential affirmation,” to Rapaport’s disruption of both preceding ontological assumptions (denial and affirmation) with his “postmetaphysical deconstruction,” will be interesting if only because of the strange grouping of such diverse, even antagonistic positions. While Zuidervaart’s examination forces this unnatural dialogue, it does so without detectable signs of misrepresenting their distinct views on artistic truth, whether of Beardsley’s

"sober rejection," Hofstadter's "enthusiastic affirmation," or Rapaport's "deep skepticism."

In Beardsley's logical empiricist epistemology, truth is understood as the correspondence of propositions to reality, but since (nonliterary) works of art are said to be neither propositional nor inferential they cannot be said to be true or false. This is an important and recurring matter for Zuidervaart, since he believes that unless art is capable of falsity it cannot be said to possess truth. Art, for Beardsley, is therefore reduced to the noncognitive status of "aesthetic value," a move Zuidervaart rejects. Nonetheless, Zuidervaart finds that while Beardsley mistakenly holds empirical science as the model for knowledge, he partially redeems himself by attempting to find a legitimate place for the arts in modern culture. Hofstadter's "existential affirmation" of artistic truth holds to a nonpropositional correspondence theory between being and true being. Zuidervaart credits him for recognizing that there is artistic truth and that both propositions and artworks share in the ability to express human existence, but he argues that Hofstadter has failed to offer an "art-internal" means of discerning between truth and falsity.

Unlike Beardsley and Hofstadter, Rapaport's "postmetaphysical deconstruction" embraces an antipropositional and anticorrespondence stance that disavows traditional philosophy as it seeks universal criteria of truth (e.g., coherence or correspondence) and truth bearers (whether they are empirical accuracy, logical consistency, assertible predictions, existential artworks, etc.). However, as dissimilar as Rapaport is from both Beardsley and Hofstadter, Zuidervaart finds that all three fail to "turn from a metaphysically framed and epistemic model of subject and object to a postmetaphysical and communicative model of subject and subject" (206). The primary villain Zuidervaart identifies in all three is a modernist obsession with autonomous artworks.

In Chapter 3, Kant, Hegel, Adorno, and Gadamer figure into Zuidervaart's introduction to his critical hermeneutic description of aesthetic validity. In place of Kant's subject-object thinking, Zuidervaart describes a notion of "imaginative cogency" wherein imagination is understood as an intersubjective process of exploration, interpretation, and presentation of aesthetic signs. Within these processes aesthetic validity is described in terms of imaginative cogency that is said to be indispensable to determining cultural orientation. Unlike Kant, who holds to a propositional and correspondence theory of truth, and who finds aesthetic validity to be noncognitive, Zuidervaart begins here to reforge traditional concepts of art into a critical hermeneutic reconstruction that is both nonpropositional (not antipropositional) and noncorrespondence.

Chapter 4, "Truth as Disclosure," begins Zuidervaart's three chapter long development of artistic truth. These three chapters form the

centerpiece of the text, as they elaborate and solidify Zuidervaart's theory—holding together the preceding three suggestive but scarcely conclusive chapters with the confirming though minimally developmental remaining three chapters. Zuidervaart starts by interrogating Heidegger's nonpropositional and noncorrespondence notion of disclosure as it appears in *Being and Time*. He agrees with most of Heidegger's thought but argues that if we accept Dasein's disclosedness as the locus of truth we do not find in Heidegger a way of asking how this disclosedness may be truly disclosive or false. Unlike Heidegger's appeal to an authenticity that shuns average everydayness and public communication, Zuidervaart desires to tie authenticity and truth to ordinary cognition and conduct. He does this principally through his notion of "fidelity" to principles or common points of reference, which is central to his description of "life-giving disclosure." Life-giving disclosure is not itself a process of artistic truth but is a larger historical process within which artistic truth plays a major role. In Chapter 5, "Imaginative Disclosure," Zuidervaart examines more closely some of the implications of his general conception and elaborates on artistic truth as "imaginative disclosure." This chapter works through Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art," which offers a more antipropositional point of view than *Being and Time*. Of recurring importance to Zuidervaart's notion of artistic truth are questions of validity, i.e., the relationship between aesthetic validity and artistic truth. In a broad sense Zuidervaart is interested in establishing why it is that we should accept the "responsibility" of thinking artistic truth in terms of validity.

Chapter 6, "Artistic Truth," explores Zuidervaart's proposed three dimensions of artistic truth: authenticity, significance, and integrity. "These dimensions all occur within the horizon of imaginative cogency as a principle of aesthetic validity" (208). This is a key chapter for Zuidervaart's overall project. Without an understanding of the correlativity between disclosure and validity, he argues, one cannot have an adequate description of artistic truth. To that end, Zuidervaart explores Adorno's "esoteric" conception of artistic truth content with hopes of mediating this position with Habermas and his "postmetaphysical account of validity." In the last section (Chapters 7–9, "Logical Positivist Dispute," "Goodman's Nominalism," "Wolterstorff's Realism"), Zuidervaart continues to develop his theory in dialogue with Anglo-American philosophers, the majority of whom accept propositional validity as the mark of truth. This section stages debates that bring illumination to Zuidervaart's theory, and further supports his claim that "emotivists, propositionists, nominalists, and realists all draw attention to various aspects of artistic truth. None of them, however, proposes a sufficiently comprehensive and critically hermeneutic approach" (212). Chapter 10, "Aesthetic Trans-

formations," summarizes what has been gained by Zuidervaat's traversing of philosophical boundaries and rehearses the main points from each chapter. This is an especially important part of the text because it brings together ideas that may have been easily missed amid the text's formidable diversity of ideas and questions.

### The Positive Problem of Artistic Truth

A number of important commitments shape Zuidervaat's project. One of the most visible is his belief in the role of artistic truth beyond being merely a lofty and esoteric philosophical problem. This may seem odd to readers since most of the text presents issues in an academic and specialized way. Yet Zuidervaat's more conventional philosophical treatments are mere preludes to his insightful analysis of what currently passes as artistic truth in the Western world, an analysis that in turn serves his larger project to develop a new integrated social and aesthetic philosophy. Zuidervaat's challenge, as he sees it, is "to give an account of artistic truth that illuminates the contemporary cultural scene" (3). His expectation is that given the right critical hermeneutical theory we may begin to recognize and create new clearings for understanding, sites for disclosure of truth, and ultimately ways of finding cultural (re)orientation.

The experience of art, for Zuidervaat, is a participation in a larger sociohistorical interpretation of signs, itself taking place within ever uncertain and expanding borders of linguistically, conceptually, and historically mediated understanding. Yet our participation in art is not simply linguistic, conceptual, or historical, as if one might reduce truth to these. Rather, Zuidervaat describes the imaginative process of (creative) interpretation as involving a distinct form of validity that he calls "imaginative cogency." This appeal to validity, which we are all said to make wherever disputes arise, helps break open suppressed options and inhibiting borders, and thereby enables the general search for personal, cultural, and institutional orientation. Thus, it is not capitalized "Truth" in art that interests Zuidervaat but understanding our participation in the struggle to find interpretive truth through our common faithfulness to principles we appeal to as we try to find our way.

Whenever we seek orientation, Zuidervaat believes there will be intrinsic even if neglected aesthetic activities or modes of disclosure. Indeed, artistic truth is often an ignored sphere of influence in comparison to prevailing ethical, political, and religious concerns, but Zuidervaat does not want to curb these by giving artistic truth privileged access to reality. In his account, artistic truth is neither the only nor a more important way to truth. Even so, for those seeking their way (of life generally), artistic truth serves an invaluable role. Of course, art in-

fluences must compete with other institutionalizing influences that may both aid and hinder. The problem of art, as Zuidervaat depicts it, is positively understood as something that encourages critical personal, cultural, and institutional understanding without becoming a dogmatizing force. He understands artistic truth as that which opens us to the new, the unexplored, and the unexpected. In this way the truth of art becomes something we experience as a "process" in the crosshairs of controversy and contestation.

As part of living out the perpetual burden of finding orientation through our creative interpretations, Zuidervaat's imaginative path-finding comes about in primarily two ways. First, it comes by way of imaginative processes, i.e., creative interpretations that expose us to unseen needs and unprescribed ways of life. Second, it comes by way of intersubjective judgments between better and worse aesthetic (imaginative) processes. Genuine orientation occurs as we come closer to a social-critical and open-ended dialogue that challenges the status quo and enables our discrimination over issues of contest through validity. Terms such as "appropriate," "fitting," "trite," "insipid," etc., may seem to be merely subjective or even frivolous gestures but these are intersubjectively meaningful claims that, for Zuidervaat, point out something (un)important. While not all intersubjective activities raise claims to validity, Zuidervaat argues that those of exploration, interpretation, and presentation are prime examples where we routinely find intrinsic validity claims. According to Zuidervaat, one of the major missteps of contemporary philosophy has been to ignore artistic truth for the sake of privileging epistemic and moral processes. In his view, moral and epistemic processes are insufficient for finding cultural orientation. To set in motion his revised notion of artistic truth within the contemporary philosophical context, then, Zuidervaat raises it to the level of ethical and epistemic claims while simultaneously limiting its role as merely one among many in a dynamic relationship that challenges life choices and cultural orientation, and opens philosophical and social horizons.

Inspired by and indebted to, but also unsatisfied with, Heidegger's notion of truth as disclosure, Zuidervaat proposes "a more comprehensive sense of truth according to which 'being in the truth' requires fidelity to that which people hold in common and which holds them in common" (97). What holds us together are our appeals to principles that allow us to judge behavior, practices, interpretations, etc., as more or less true. Truth, for Zuidervaat, or at least the process of truth, is the life-giving disclosure of a historical opening of society, leading to a "flourishing" of all people (and creatures) across societal and geographical boundaries. In our fidelity to principles Zuidervaat contends that we may participate in life-giving disclosure that gives rise to a thriving that

would not otherwise occur.

Heidegger's understanding of the disclosedness of Dasein as an openness is replaced by Zuidervaat with an opening of society to its own inherent struggle and appeal to validity claims. In this struggle artistic truth is one part of the larger historical process of life-giving disclosure, both of which are marked by our fidelity—the proverbial linchpin of truth. Fidelity is given to principles that individuals may not personally hold or universally recognize, yet to which they make appeals. The reason for this is not merely because being in the truth requires fidelity to “the commonly holding/held” and we are all naturally faithful to a common accord—which is obviously false since some are ignorant while others rebel against the commonly accepted—but because as members of society we all constantly and necessarily struggle over transient historical matters. To find any kind of resolution and accord among members requires that we make appeals to standards others understand and appreciate. For example, principles of solidarity and justice that exist within distinct historical horizons are, like other principles, “learned, achieved, contested, reformulated, and ignored” (126). Truth as life-giving disclosure is wrestling with our own historical situatedness as we try to give an account of the commonly held, all the while recognizing that truth is always more than principles, for these are never fixed universal truths but emergent and contested historical fidelities which, while taking us beyond ourselves, also go beyond themselves. Truth as life-giving disclosure orients us by “opening our personal and social worlds to ones we do not currently inhabit” (208). In the case of the experience of art this means that while the interpreter's understanding of artwork may disclose or uncover one's situation, bringing illumination and awareness, it may also prompt conflicts with unexpected artistic import, leading toward significant (re)orientation in his or her lifeworld. Truth, then, is this process of opening and exposure rather than a fixed and universal standard or criterion of reality.

If truth is something that emerges from out of disagreement or conflict then we may be sure that we are not always in truth, even (especially) if we are always in agreement since truth is never more than a fluid consensus within the shifting where we try to find our way. Yet Zuidervaat seems to recognize that even discord and disagreement rely on prior understanding (commonalities) rather than sustained misunderstanding (differences)—a Gadamerian emphasis. Hence there is a reciprocal interconnectivity between infidelity and fidelity, truth and untruth, in the process of life-giving disclosure. This is further supported by Zuidervaat's proposed artistic social critique when combined with the universal hermeneutical appropriation of the other (person, text, work of art, etc.) that is characterized as always open to further (mis)under-

standings. This “openness” is essential, according to Zuidervaat, if one is to describe adequately the process of truth in its dynamic character.

As part of the larger process of life-giving disclosure, Zuidervaat refers to processes of artistic truth generally as “imaginative disclosure.” This form of disclosure, which is also connected to the intersubjective exploration and interpretation within life-giving disclosure, is not merely something that occurs in our experiences, interpretations, or talk about art, but something that occurs in art itself. Moreover, what is happening in imaginative disclosure is similar but distinct from “imagination” in the typical sense of personal creativity and/or fiction. “‘Imagination’ should be understood as referring to intersubjective processes rather than to a mental capacity, and as involving aesthetic signs rather than mental contents” (62). The relationship between validity and disclosure figures prominently in Zuidervaat's notion of imaginative disclosure, for he wants to connect them in a way that satisfies a middle ground somewhere between that of Heidegger's well known emphasis on disclosure and Habermas's well known emphasis on validity claims. While Zuidervaat borrows heavily from Habermas's understanding of intersubjective principles and validity claims to make sense of aesthetic validity, following Heidegger's insight into the nature of disclosure, he argues that there is more to validity than Habermas is willing to allow. Zuidervaat agrees with Habermas that a critical aesthetic theory needs to distinguish between validity and disclosure, yet they must, in Zuidervaat's account, remain intimately linked. Hence, he is careful to describe the relationship between aesthetic validity and artistic truth, noting their interrelatedness without eliminating their distinctions and without equating validity with propositional truth or absorbing validity into disclosure. Moreover, by connecting imaginative disclosure to life-giving disclosure, Zuidervaat is tightly wedding societal flourishing to artistic truth. In the process of exploring, interpreting, and presenting aesthetic signs, we may begin to thrive or flourish, however these may be understood within a given sociohistoric horizon.

“Imaginative cogency” summarizes Zuidervaat's notion of aesthetic validity as the horizon within which we appeal to such aesthetic standards as “complexity, depth, and intensity” (130). It is a distinct kind of validity we refer to when we make judgments about artistic disclosure, find our interpretations challenged, etc. In Zuidervaat's account, controversy and debate over aesthetic validity claims must find resolution through appeal to imaginative cogency, for, as already noted, ethical or epistemological appeals will not suffice. While essential to cultural pathfinding, Zuidervaat argues that imaginative cogency also serves to conduct or guide aesthetic conception and conservation. To be clear, truth as disclosure (in art) is related to but not inhibited by or the same

as imaginative cogency. Furthermore, while all disclosive art practices must appeal to aesthetic validity, as a principle, Zuidervaat argues that imaginative cogency is also relevant to nonartistic cognition and conduct, and to modern society generally.

Following insights from Adorno and Habermas, Zuidervaat concludes that artistic truth is internal to art phenomena, and following Habermas's theory of validity claims he argues that it is something divided into three intersecting dimensions of truth. Within the horizon of imaginative cogency Zuidervaat identifies three criteria or modes of imaginative disclosure with which we may judge art phenomena to be true. To the degree they may be said to be true they are "imaginatively disclosive of." Zuidervaat's three criteria include "authenticity" (involving the author's intentions), "significance" (involving the audience's interpretive needs), and "integrity" (involving the work's internal demands). He argues that we all have certain expectations in our encounters with art and one another, and that these expectations serve as aesthetic criteria. Authenticity and significance are relevant to all art phenomena, while Zuidervaat reserves the notion of integrity primarily for art that is institutionally constituted as artworks. "The expectation of authenticity is the expectation that art phenomena be true with respect to ... the experience or vision from which competent art making allows them to arise. Authenticity is a matter of mediated expression that is imaginatively disclosive" (128). Significance, which is distinct from relevance, is an expectation in regard to art phenomena being true to a society's need for worthwhile cultural presentations. If it is not worth our time or attention it cannot be said to be significant. Moreover, it must be both an interpretable presentation and imaginatively disclosive. Significance is a "crossing of worlds rather than the mere making or rendering of a world. In expecting significance of an artwork we open ourselves to having the artwork's import conflict with our own interpretive needs. We open ourselves to having the work's postsubjective world and our own social world disagree, and to having this disagreement call for changes in the social world" (179).

Integrity is more relevant to artworks than to other art phenomena. For artwork (art phenomena that have been institutionally constituted) to possess integrity it must agree with or live up to its own internal demands, which includes meeting more than its own internal demands. "The expectation of integrity is an expectation that the artwork be true with respect to ... its own internal demands. Integrity is a matter of configured import that is imaginatively (self-) disclosive" (130). The truth of artistic import is what comes about because of an artwork's doubling of its own presentation. "The truth of falsity of such import will involve (1) the artwork's peculiarly doubled (self-) disclosure, (2) the imaginative

cogency of the artwork's structure and (self-) reference, and (3) a potential contribution to pursuing cultural orientation" (209–10).

With his notion of imaginative cogency Zuidervaat is claiming that a rational evaluation of the aesthetic is not a baseless venture, while simultaneously rejecting a universally binding principle of abstract rationality. Genuine orientation and freedom occur through our creative interpretations, which are neither bound solely to aesthetic validity claims nor let to run frenziedly without our responsible intersubjective accounting.

### New Horizons of Truth: Hermeneutical Bridging

Zuidervaat begins *Artistic Truth* with a prevenient remark. After noting the largely neglected status of artistic truth by contemporary philosophers, he writes: "The topic is complex and contentious, and the most important contributions come from thinkers whose work resists paraphrase. One must think twice before entering labyrinthine ruins where contemporary philosophers fear to tread" (1). Why is this? What is it about artistic truth that warrants such a foreboding characterization? In the end, Zuidervaat's "multidimensional process of imaginative disclosure" does not in any way simplify or make plain the exceedingly complex and layered experience of artistic truth, but it does make things more accessible (7). For reasons already given, by connecting artistic truth to ordinary cognition and conduct Zuidervaat has brought art back from the threshold of abstract obscurity and social irrelevance. However, the question remains, Has Zuidervaat offered a compelling account of both truth in general and artistic truth specifically? Let me answer this in three ways: by pointing to perceived shortcomings, by highlighting major strengths, and finally, as a conclusion, by briefly situating *Artistic Truth* within a larger hermeneutical context.

As I have already mentioned, there are so many diverse philosophers and philosophies in *Artistic Truth* that the majority of readers will feel alienated from a great portion of the unfamiliar material. The problem is not so much that readers must then take his word at face value, but that many will be tempted to dismiss his case as superficial and unconvincing. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that Zuidervaat asks so many questions and tries to complete so many tasks that there is scarcely any room reserved for much needed elaboration and examples to help tie ideas together. For instance, one would expect to find a large share of the text devoted to elaborating his three dimensions or modes of intersecting truth within the horizons of imaginative cogency, yet Zuidervaat offers proportionally little. If the second volume is to be anything like the first, a four-volume series might be better than two.

Added to the flurry of activity and the consequential blurring of issues is that while Heidegger receives privileged treatment, his reputation as a notoriously obscure and difficult thinker is well deserved, making it even more likely that the survival rate for readers will be low.

Second, it is curious that while Zuidervaat begins with the fact of interpretation he exerts considerable care in working through propositional and correspondence theories of truth. This is especially odd since he not only limits the role of propositional truth but accepts early on in his project that he must show how an emphasis on fidelity to principles does not sabotage the nonpropositional character of artistic truth. As a correction to Heidegger's antipositional tendencies, modest efforts might have made sense, but having already moved to a critical hermeneutic account Zuidervaat seems to be continually looking over his shoulder to detailed matters that contribute little in the end. Indeed his desire to paint a panoramic portrait of philosophy that crosses borders helps clarify his position, but the sheer scope of such an endeavor consumes much-needed resources, i.e., space and the reader's attention span, and sometimes teases tensions that needlessly detract from the marrow of the text.

Despite my hesitations *Artistic Truth* is a major achievement with its major strengths represented in the many ways Zuidervaat challenges us to rethinking artistic truth. These strengths include: taking seriously the hermeneutic character of truth and the validity of cultural interpretation, drawing out artistic truth as relates to both knowledge and contemporary social issues, placing imagination at the front of the awakening of society and showing why there are good reasons for trying to overcome a lack of imagination as it manifests in dogmatizing ideologies, shifting from an emphasis on autonomous art products to the social constructedness of artistic truth that includes broader social activities, punctuating a sense of social accountability and responsibility in regard to (artistic) truth claims, describing how the "cognitive functions of the arts are constitutive to their aesthetic worth and societal importance" and, finally, showing how it might be possible for philosophy to find greater social relevance through the arts (205).

For all these benefits it may still be unclear where Zuidervaat's hermeneutical aesthetics excels where others come up short or, for that matter, why the experience of art has been connected to hermeneutics, a discipline better known for its relationship to texts. Contrary to what some may assume, it is not at all odd to see hermeneutics connected to the experience of art. We see this, for instance, as Gadamer's starting point in *Truth and Method*. What is unique to Zuidervaat is connecting art to a much more pronounced sense of validity which, again, is similar to what Zuidervaat identifies in Habermas but offset by Heidegger's

influence. Thus, if we look to the larger hermeneutical context it makes sense that Zuidervaat's theory would fall squarely between Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics (for which Heidegger's existential analytic is extremely important) and Habermas's critical hermeneutics.

As an opening query we should ask, What kind of reflection is possible or valid in dialogue (Gadamer) and discourse (Habermas)? Asking what passes for truth (or validity) in dialogue and discourse raises questions of authority and tradition over which Gadamer and Habermas famously debated. On the one hand, Gadamer argues that we belong to history rather than history belonging to us. It is, for Gadamer, our historical situatedness that makes experience possible. The prejudices (prejudgments) we have by virtue of our tradition are not merely limiting conditions but the preconditions for all understanding. Hence, understanding must transcend method and be pre-theoretical since we are incapable of reaching outside of our situatedness to make judgments and offer rational critiques. Critical reflection and rationality must always happen within the possibilities and limits afforded by our language and tradition. On the other side of the debate, Habermas insists we must subject our prejudices and even tradition itself to a critical and quasi-objective examination. For Habermas, the only way to liberate ourselves from distortions and ideologies inherent to tradition and language is a critical social science immune to the corrosive effects of history. To understand without distortion one must possess a way out of the hermeneutical circle. Thus, while Gadamer professes an ontological description of understanding without prescriptive norms, Habermas works through methodological and epistemological assumptions with a normatively based theory.

To summarize their debate we could ask, Is truth something that emerges in the play of dialogue which remains open to the priority of the question within the circularity of the hermeneutical experience (Gadamer), or the communicative competence of the ideal speech situation and its unrestrained and critical discourse (Habermas)? We may now also ask, If art phenomena are disclosive of validity claims and these claims are emergent historical principles, how is it that we might responsibly reflect upon the truth of our intersubjective experiences (Zuidervaat)? The answer for those disappointed in Habermas's propositional, trans-historical, quasi-objective, and universal rationality or in Gadamer for seemingly surrendering us to the infinite play of history and our relative horizons, will find in Zuidervaat a bridge between Habermas's universal rationality (validity) and Gadamer's historical perspectivism: imaginative disclosure.

Similar to Habermas's universal pragmatics, Zuidervaat employs a sense of universal rationality through his fidelity to principles. Like



Gadamer, who describes the understanding of art as involving something both intrinsic to art itself and something open to creative interpretations, Zuidervaat understands truth in terms of its historical relativity as both given and open. Perhaps the most obvious bridging of critical and philosophical hermeneutics is the role Zuidervaat assigns to critique. Zuidervaat argues that interpretive assessment is something inherent to experiences of art. Gadamer's hermeneutics also possesses an inherent though far less obvious critical stance, which Habermas interprets as Gadamer's passive and uncritical acceptance of the past and its harmful prejudices. In fact, as Zuidervaat depicts it in his own theory, Gadamer understands every event of understanding as a struggle and challenge with one's present and past, a dialogue in which one is challenged and challenges the other. The experience of art, for Gadamer, is one form of challenge within tradition that allows us to overcome opinion and disabling prejudices. While Zuidervaat, unlike Gadamer, understands art through regulative principles, these are not meant to be rigid or free of tradition. Although, like Habermas, Zuidervaat retains a more pronounced sense of critique, he seems more willing to acknowledge our dependence on tradition, like Gadamer. In this way Zuidervaat appears to offer a critique "within" the hermeneutical experience while also being able to deal with tradition in a more principled and (pre)theoretical way by drawing out the tension between validity and tradition. Thus, in the end, *Artistic Truth* provides an illuminating examination that crosses philosophical traditions and offers a refreshing perspective on critical thought within contemporary hermeneutics capable of taking the role of artistic truth seriously.