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The Insistence of Art

Paul A. Kottman

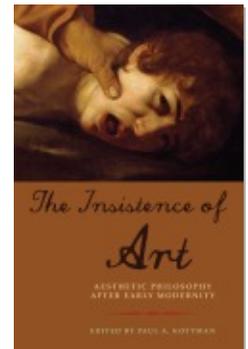
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Reaching Conclusions: Art and Philosophy in Hegel and Shakespeare

Paul A. Kottman

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own . . .
. . . Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *The Tempest* (Epilogue)

In what might be called the epilogue to his lectures on fine art, and immediately after naming Shakespeare in conclusion, G. W. F. Hegel addressed his audience directly. Echoing Prospero's valediction at the end of *The Tempest*, Hegel declared:¹

Now, with the development of the kinds of comedy we have reached the real end of our philosophical inquiry. We began with symbolic art where personality struggles to find itself as form and content and to become objective to itself. We proceeded to the plastic art of Greece where the Divine, now conscious of itself, is presented to us in living individuals. We ended with the romantic art of emotion and deep feeling where absolute subjective personality moves free in itself and in the spiritual world. Yet on this peak comedy leads at the same time to the dissolution of art altogether . . . and subjective personality alone shows itself self-confident and self-assured in this dissolution.

Now at the end we have arranged every essential category of the beautiful and every essential form of art into a philosophical garland, and weaving it is one of the worthiest tasks that philosophy is capable of

completing. For in art we have to do, not with any agreeable or useful child's play, but with the liberation of the spirit from the content and forms of finitude, with the presence and reconciliation of the Absolute in what is apparent and visible. My one aim [throughout these lectures] has been to seize in thought and prove the fundamental nature of the beautiful and art, and to follow it through all the stages it has gone through in the course of its realization. I hope that in this chief point my exposition has satisfied you. And now when the link forged between us generally and in relation to our common aim has been broken, it is my final wish that the higher and indestructible bond of the Idea of beauty and truth may link us and keep us firmly united now and for ever.²

At one level, anyone who has taken part in a lecture course will recognize what Hegel is trying to accomplish with these last words. He is clearly seeking applause. Hegel's plea ("I hope . . . my exposition has satisfied you") is every bit as transparent as Prospero's (" . . . release me from my bands/With the help of your good hands/ . . . or else my project fails, which was to please").

Lest we mistake this for narcissistic neediness, however, we should note that neither Hegel nor Shakespeare/Prospero is asking for an appreciation of who they are as individuals; nor are they soliciting an acknowledgment of their role in this particular context (professor, philosopher, actor, artist).³ If either were the case, then the applause could have been solicited at the outset of the performance, or at any time, rather than at its shared conclusion.⁴ Instead, both Hegel and Shakespeare/Prospero seek acknowledgment that a concluding stage of a collective process has been reached. The applause they seek, in other words, would amount to a demonstration of its actually having been earned in the wake of some prior development or shared activity.

In this essay, I want to claim that both Hegel's and Shakespeare's epilogues aim to demonstrably reflect—rather than merely assert or describe—provisional conclusions to historical activities (art and philosophical "science," respectively) that are, in virtue of such conclusions, attempts to render these practices intelligible from within.⁵ I want to suggest, further, that bringing an activity—like drama or teaching philosophy—to a conclusion "from within," or "as part of" its own doing, is a crucial test of our freedom and rationality, an attempt to assess our own answerability for what we do. To this end, I discuss ways in which these epilogues—these "reached conclusions"—hold clues not only to what Hegel is doing with Shakespeare or modern drama in the *Lectures on Fine Art* but also

for Hegel's broader philosophical ambitions and Shakespeare's artistic self-understanding.

Everything I have to say about all of this will, however, be made clearer if I begin with a few observations about Hegel's remarks on Shakespeare both in this specific passage and more generally. So, let me start there.

I

Discussions of Hegel and Shakespeare—or “Hegel on Shakespeare”—typically explore what Hegel had to say about certain works by Shakespeare or about Shakespearean (or “modern”) drama generally, or about tragedy or comedy. The goal being to explain how Hegel's reflections help us better understand Shakespeare, or modern dramatic art, or how interpretations of Shakespeare might help us elaborate or revise aspects of Hegel's philosophical system.⁶

Intriguingly, however, Hegel himself does not discuss or interpret Shakespeare in much detail in his *Lectures on Fine Art*.⁷ Hegel does, of course, make a number of what we could call interpretive remarks about a number of plays by Shakespeare (as well as other poetic works) in the aesthetics lectures and elsewhere.⁸ Hegel also names titles of works and characters, and mentions specific scenes or plot points in his discussion of romantic poetry, for instance.⁹ And to some extent he interprets individual plays, such as *Macbeth*, when he claims that “ambition” becomes Macbeth's pathos without devouring his “far-reaching individuality.”¹⁰ Nonetheless, the defense of that particular interpretation of *Macbeth* is not Hegel's chief aim in that discussion.

Indeed, not only is Hegel not firmly wedded (I suspect) to that particular interpretation of *Macbeth*, but also (and more important) Hegel understands his own view of Shakespeare's drama—his own discernment of “the principle of subjectivity” or “the subjective inner life” in Shakespeare—to be a viewpoint in whose very achievement Shakespeare's artistic practice plays a crucial role, rather than a wholly external or theoretical “take” on Shakespeare. What Hegel wants to show, then, is how his own philosophical standpoint on art “seizes in thought and . . . prove(s)” the history of fine art itself (“the fundamental nature of the beautiful and art . . . through all the stages it has gone through in the course of its realization”). The principle of subjectivity, or a character's inner life, is not just a philosophical principle or social reality that is nicely illustrated, exemplified, or expressed or in the work of Shakespeare.¹¹ Rather, for Hegel, it is one of the achievements of Shakespearean drama to have helped bring subjectivity to

life—to have “enlivened” our inner lives in ways that are intertwined with, but not reducible to, how “the right of subjectivity” emerged historically in religious practices (like the veneration of the saints and increased attention to the story of Christ the man) or political history (the way intimate aspects of domestic family members’ lives started to count as properly political concerns).¹²

Although Hegel often refers to Shakespeare’s plays and other artworks as “examples,” such works are not, for him, instantiations of philosophical truths or insights achievable independently of such artworks (and then retroactively made applicable to them). Artworks and practices are not perspicuous instances of some other actuality that is “really” under consideration; they are the reality (*Wirklichkeit*). Artists do not imbue their works with some separable meaning or knowledge, in Hegel’s view. Content and form are realized together, just as (for Hegel) intention and action are inseparable. His philosophy of art is not just an external philosophical standpoint from which to view art—rather, it is continuous with what the art itself has been doing: expressing, reflecting, evaluating, and enlivening norms and concepts (such as subjectivity).¹³ This is not to say that Hegel sees himself as an artist, or that he thinks his philosophy is doing just the same thing as art. Rather, it means that Hegel regards aesthetic expression to be just as indispensable for philosophical reflection as philosophical reflection is for the completion of aesthetic expression—bearing in mind that the relation between art and philosophy is itself embedded in the historical development of both. It is this mutual indispensability that is on display in the epilogues invoked at the outset.¹⁴ More on this in a moment.

Next observation: There is a propinquity of practical substance—not only of form or rhetoric—between the epilogues of Hegel’s *Aesthetics* and Shakespeare’s *Tempest*.¹⁵ In his epilogue to his *Lectures on Fine Art* Hegel does something with Shakespeare that he does with no other artist that he mentions in the course of the aesthetics lectures: Hegel imitates Shakespeare, by which I mean he displays a logical and practical affinity between his activity (teaching philosophy, reflecting on art) and Shakespeare’s or Prospero’s (drama, art, theater)—in dramatic form as well as verbal content. Indeed, Hegel mimics Shakespeare’s drama at, arguably, its own most self-reflexive moment: Prospero’s epilogue, so often heard as Shakespeare’s valedictory reflection on his own dramatic work.¹⁶ Moreover, Hegel imitates Shakespeare in the act of concluding a series of lectures that he holds up as doing distinctly philosophical work—as if simultaneously insisting on the necessity of such imitation for a reflective, philosophical attention to the course of art’s realization (*Realisation*). Furthermore, this reflects

the core of Hegel's ambition in the lectures, namely to demonstrate or in some way reenact (rather than merely report or describe) the emergence of modern art out of classical and symbolic art—the achievement, that is, of a provisional freedom in human affairs, or Spirit's view of itself as self-determining. If this is to be demonstrated, then it must be achieved (and hence, reenactable) from the point of view of a historical subject (us, Prospero's audience, Hegel's students) as something like a dramatic education.¹⁷

Furthermore, as if for emphasis, Hegel imitates (educatively reenacts) Shakespeare even as he explicitly disavows further analytical discussion or detailed interpretation of Shakespeare's work. Immediately before pronouncing the epilogue cited at length above, Hegel claims that “the modern world has developed a type of comedy which is truly comical and truly poetic,” and then elliptically adds—as the very last sentence of the entire lecture course, before beginning the epilogue: “As a brilliant example of this sort of thing, I will name Shakespeare once again, in conclusion, but without going into detail.”¹⁸ Students of Hegel's *Aesthetics*—two volumes, 1,237 pages in its English translation—may cackle at that last remark. After all, Hegel saw no reason not to “go into detail” with regard to other artworks and practices. He treats his students to lengthy and intricate discussions of Doric and Ionic columns, obelisks, the Memnon statues, for instance, and to long discussions of anatomical details in classical sculpture.¹⁹ It is assuredly not a philosopher's lack of patience with the details of artworks that explains Hegel's reluctance to “go into detail” about Shakespeare. Nor—given the sheer length and ambition of Hegel's lecture course—can we believe that it is somehow Hegel's eagerness to finish speaking that can explain his reticence to go “into detail” when it comes to Shakespeare. Still less can we believe that Hegel was somehow uninterested in the textual details of Shakespeare's drama—quite the contrary!²⁰

And yet, intriguingly, Hegel does not “cite” Shakespeare here, the way he—on the previous page!—cited Molière's *Tartuffe* or the way he had quoted from Shakespeare earlier in the lectures, when he wanted to praise Shakespeare's skill at portraying his character's capacity for self-distancing, or the way he cites (in altered form) Schiller's poem “Freundschaft” at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* or even the way he obliquely refers to Sophocles' *Antigone* in his discussion of Greek *Sittlichkeit* in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.²¹ In the epilogues under consideration we seem to have moved from citation (even oblique citation) into—I am suggesting—something closer to practical imitation or “dramatic education.” What to make of this?

2

One explanation might emerge if we consider that Hegel's most detailed formalist analyses of particular works—such as those just mentioned—occur in the pages he devotes to symbolic art and classical art: namely, to those modes of art that Hegel regards as characterizing art's past, such as Egyptian obelisks or the heads of Hercules in Greek sculpture.²² It is as if Hegel thinks such formalist analysis can offer appropriate explanatory criteria for those (past) art forms, whereas what Hegel calls romantic, or modern, art calls for a different kind of "science."²³

Recall that the defect that Hegel saw in symbolic art was the indeterminacy of its Idea—its attribution of the source or meaning of human practices to something beyond human consciousness—and the corresponding "mysterious sublimity" of its products. The limitation of classical art, in contrast, was its "restrictedness" to the "sphere of art," by which Hegel meant—I think—the way that classical art restricts itself to finding an appropriate embodiment of spirit, the right concrete form for the "infinite subjectivity of the Idea." Hegel saw this in classical art's presentation of the human form, especially in classical sculpture as the sensuous presentation of spirit. Classical art limits itself to efforts at finding an appropriate formal embodiment of spirit (the human form of classical sculpture), and hence is restricted in (or *to*) its own activity, and hence cannot be really free. And, if art is not free—if it is restricted to its own sphere—then it is not an adequate presentation of *Geist* as free.²⁴ Put another way, the problem for classical art (and for the Greek world, in Hegel's account) is whether freedom could be actualized other than by beauty—whether it also imbues other social practices, even if that entails the dissolution of that beautiful world.²⁵ However, what it could mean for art *not* to restrict itself to the sphere of art—for art to transcend itself from "within its own sphere," as Hegel puts it—is not immediately clear.²⁶

Further, the distinction between symbolic, classical, and romantic art is revealed only in light of a historical vantage, or achieved self-awareness. Hegel's distinctions between symbolic, classical, and romantic art are not primarily chronological distinctions, then, or an attempt at periodization; they are distinctions that adhere only in virtue of a perceived achievement or practical demonstration of those distinctions. This means these achievements must be both artistic, and what Hegel calls scientific in his characterization of his philosophy of art (which is one reason why the history of art can now be seen as inviting or calling for philosophical reflection). If "symbolic," "classical," and "romantic" name art forms or practices that

develop historically out of each other in that order, then this is not because that development just so happened to go that way, but could have happened otherwise; it is a necessary development (which, from our vantage now, could only have happened in that order).²⁷ So, while we can always debate or revise the particulars of the chronology—say, by reevaluating the particulars of Greek or Egyptian or Indian art—the point of such a reevaluation would not be just a better periodization or chronology, but must entail, if we are to take seriously the historical character of the development, the recognition that certain practices (like painting on canvas or symphonic music or Shakespearean drama) were not always there, and their historical emergence calls for explanation, not just chronological dating.

Hegel's historical-developmental account is meant to provide just such an explanation. And so when Hegel turns to romantic or modern artistic practices—Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Bach's *Saint Matthew's Passion*, or Rembrandt's portraits—he tends to turn away from formal analysis of specific artworks or features and toward a consideration of these as reflective historical practices or self-critical processes (rather than as a collection of exemplary artworks, like *Antigone* or the Bacchus statue). Because Hegel thought that “our whole spiritual culture is (now) of such a kind that (the artist) stands within the world of reflection and its relations and could not by any act of will and decision abstract himself from it,” we ourselves cannot stand back from modern artistic practices (Shakespearean drama, say) and give a formalist account of specific art products—the way Hegel thought he was in a position to analyze the relation between form and Idea in the Egyptian pyramids or the Greek Bacchus statue. Put another way, when Hegel surveys modern art (broadly construed), he sees its distinctiveness not in this or that characteristic feature, but in a basic question it poses: Namely, *is* it an artistic practice at all? Modern art, Hegel thinks, is a practice that raises the question of its own status and legitimacy as a practice—and in this sense, at least, manages to transcend classical art's restrictedness to its status as art. The point I wish to emphasize here, however, is that Hegel's practical *method* for teaching or philosophizing about art likewise demands a different explanatory mode for modern (romantic) art, as compared to the more formalist approach appropriate to classical or symbolic art.

By the same token, although classical and symbolic art share common features or techniques—again, because both classical and symbolic art practices just *are* attempts at giving sensuous form to the Idea—there is no exhaustive list of characteristics or features that add up to modern art

(like Shakespearean drama) because its expressive possibilities have not yet been exhausted or reified as emblematic works or appropriate sensuous forms.²⁸ This is why Hegel sees Shakespearean drama or Rembrandt's portraiture as art forms—as ongoing art practices that are made manifest in a particular body of work (Shakespeare's or Rembrandt's) without having been paradigmatically concretized in any particular work or generically appropriate mode. There are, we might say, no representative masterpieces in romantic art—no work that can be said to exhaustively express what any sociohistorical form of life thinks it is. Indeed, modern artists are perhaps distinguished from (anonymously made, or collectively made) masterworks of the past by the fact that modern masters leave behind no representative masterpiece; they rather show themselves to be capable of producing many definitive works, or works in progress. (Artists whose names we know—from Rembrandt to Picasso and Joyce or Proust—are masters inasmuch as they keep reinventing themselves through developments or self-corrections, not just by reflecting on a technique—as in Michelangelo's *Prisoners*—but also by putting their entire self-conception as artists, their commitment to their art, into question.) Rather than approach romantic art as characterized by certain features or formal characteristics, then, Hegel tends to explain the romantic arts as the emergence of distinctive practices, which remain ongoing and potentially self-legitimizing—the same way we think of painting on canvas or symphonic music as art forms that arrived on the world stage at a particular place and time, and which continue today insofar as they have not yet fully exhausted their expressive capacities.²⁹ Again, the point is not just to establish a precise date or origin for painting on canvas or for orchestra music. Such matters are subject to debate, and we can change our minds about the particulars. The larger point is that art practices and artistic mediums emerge historically and unfold through historical developments that can be retrospectively examined. The point of changing our minds about the particulars or dates would be the new historical self-understanding such a change of mind would amount to (and not just a different chronology).

One measure of this vitality of modern art for Hegel—I am suggesting—is that he does not think that he can currently furnish a formalist account of, say, *The Tempest* that would have the same explanatory force as his accounts of the formal properties of the Egyptian pyramids or the Greek columns.³⁰ We cannot (at this historical juncture, any more than in Hegel's Berlin) say why Shakespeare shaped his dramas thus, because the collective self-conception (or "Idea," in Hegel's parlance) to which Shakespearean drama gives form is still being articulated and worked out in our

own contemporary practices (artistic—but also political, social, economic, familial, affective, and philosophical).³¹ Because modern art can no longer, *on its own* (within the restricted sphere of art), claim to satisfy any spiritual need—that highest vocation is what Hegel regards as past—whatever satisfactions or occasions for understanding it offers are now necessarily intertwined with other reflective social practices (including the teaching of philosophy, or what Hegel calls scientific treatment).³²

It is worth remembering, too, that Hegel goes out of his way to distinguish his own “scientific way of treating art” from that of Aristotle’s *Poetics* or Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, or Henry Home’s *Elements of Criticism*, along these very same lines. Although these earlier works of art theory “contain much that is instructive” in “single instances,” says Hegel, they also resemble the “non-philosophical” or “empirical” sciences in that they present “rules and prescriptions in accordance with which works of art had to be produced.”³³ That is, such theories of art tend to consider the formal particularities of artworks irrespective of their historical development—irrespective, that is, of transformations in their content as well as their form. For Hegel, a properly philosophical science of art would manage to connect its own emergence (as science) to the transformations in the form and content of art, over the course of its specific developments. This science must be historically systematic rather than formalist, categorical, or analytic.³⁴

And because, when it comes to modern art, this means accounting for art’s intertwining with other social practices, that too requires a demonstration that—for reasons just given—cannot be formalist or descriptive.³⁵ Hegel thus thinks he has to show and not just tell what it is for art to transcend itself from within its own sphere—where “showing” must also mean demonstrably achieving the intertwining of art and the philosophy of art as historical-reflective practices. Or, at least, I want to suggest that this is the horizon in which to best understand the dramatic-educative character of Hegel’s epilogue, as well as the relation in which Prospero’s epilogue stands with respect to Shakespeare’s art.

3

Now let me turn back to the two epilogues cited at the outset. I am arguing that both Hegel’s and Shakespeare’s epilogues demonstrably achieve—rather than merely assert or describe—provisional conclusions (though not once-and-for-all endpoints) to historical activities (art and philosophy) that are (partly in virtue of such conclusions) capable of understanding themselves, of reflecting on themselves, of explaining themselves. Philoso-

phy and art are self-explaining, self-legitimizing practices; they turn out to require no transhistorical source of legitimacy in order to continue as practices.

Building on this, I now suggest that both Shakespeare (or Prospero's) "Art" and Hegel's "philosophy of art" present themselves as ongoing social practices that can be seen as constituting the conditions for their own self-understanding.³⁶ The concluding stages of their development do not lie outside the history that is coursed (both in Hegel's lectures and in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*). Instead, both epilogues reflect, from *within*, on the conditions and limits of the activities they bring to a provisional close. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, for instance, it is as if Prospero has spent all those years studying or practicing his art in order to learn how (or what it would mean) to give it up. We should likewise see Hegel's philosophy of art as a process in which philosophy reflects practically on the limits and conditions of that philosophy (in this case, the history of art) as something internal to it, rather than as something beyond it. This is why Hegel keeps reminding his students, from the opening stages of his lectures, that art is not some irrational other to philosophy, but that the history of art itself helps make philosophy a self-constituting science. (All of this resists easy summarization. This is why, as I am trying to suggest, something like a demonstrative education is required.)

Another difficulty lies in explaining how art or philosophy could even qualify as demonstrably educative practices for Shakespeare and Hegel. Hegel considers these, along with religion, to be domains of what he calls Absolute Spirit.³⁷ And Shakespeare seems to make Prospero—whose art is, apparently, all-powerful and keenly aware of itself as such—an allegory for the fate of human artistic practices *tout court*.³⁸ But what do Shakespearean "Art" or Hegelian "Absolute Spirit" denote? What, if anything, makes these practices (art, religion, and philosophy—or any other candidate we might want to add to the list) different from the sorts of practices and institutions that Hegel analyzes as "objective spirit"?³⁹

I understand "objective spirit" in Hegel to be the normative, rule-based activities through which human societies organize themselves—everything from explicitly articulated legal systems to informal social practices in their cultural or historical specificity. We might think of objective spirit, in other words, as the sphere of collectively deliberated reasons for doing (or not doing) things, where those reasons obtain only by being acted on. Thus, objective spirit—since it needs rule followers (or rule breakers)—also presupposes subjective spirit—namely, the way in which self-conscious individuals are formed in relation to those social rules and norms.⁴⁰

Of course, Hegel's account of objective and subjective spirit is more complicated and detailed than this cursory description can capture. I offer it only to get into focus what Hegel was getting at when he spoke of art, religion, and philosophy as dimensions of Absolute Spirit. Why, after all, does Hegel think philosophy and art are not just rule-based normative practices (hence, just part of objective spirit) in relation to which, say, individuals might (as part of subjective spirit) be formed as artists or philosophers? Likewise, we might ask: Why does Prospero not treat his art the way that, say, sailors treat sailing, or kings treat ruling, or actors treat playing a role? What entitles Prospero to address us, to break open the very meaning of a role-based activity? In one sense, of course, the practices that Hegel characterizes as Absolute Spirit are also objective, social practices. Yet Hegel seems to think that they are not just culturally specific practices. (I am suggesting that *The Tempest* expresses similar things about learning or practicing art.)

First of all, this is because art and philosophy are activities whose products or works not only signal or hint at the endurance of a particular set of practices, or social world—the way that raising a red lantern might be one sign of a traditional Chinese society's vitality. Art and philosophy (though not only these) can also install authoritative norms for a community.⁴¹ They manifest not just the endurance of a particular social world, but—instead—something like what any particular social world thinks it is in virtue of its endurance.⁴²

Second, the activities that Hegel characterizes as Absolute Spirit are different from objective spirit in that they not only give us reasons to act but also afford us the chance to see ourselves as agents connected in a fundamental way to our past actions. That is, they are activities that allow for a kind of reflective distancing through which we, as individual subjects, can come to some provisional understanding of our role in the life of a particular social world, and in such a way that this provisional understanding allows us to transform that world (via the practice of art or philosophy).

This latter qualification matters, since after all we can also achieve a reflective distance from certain practices by, say, stopping the practice (the way that the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade is, minimally, a reflective self-distancing from the practice itself; or, more modestly, the way a bad habit becomes the object of reflection as soon as one ceases the habit), or by carrying on with the practice in a self-styled, parodic fashion (the way Renaissance courtiers went on wearing swords and thereby drawing attention to the empty formality of swordsmanship at court). When we

self-consciously stop or continue a practice, we are also seeing ourselves as agents in relation to those practices. But, and this is the point I want to underscore, by achieving a reflective distance from whatever we do only in virtue of stopping, starting, or self-consciously parodying the practice, we fail to deeply transform the practice itself in light of our reflection or new self-understanding. And by failing to wholly transform the practice itself (from within), we show that activity to have been unfree, unreasonable—something from which we need to achieve a certain distance in order to more fully see ourselves as agents.

Let me try to put this point differently. To interrupt or abolish a social practice—like foot-binding or dueling or the Atlantic slave trade—is to claim that the practice should not continue; but the cessation itself cannot explain the (prior duration of the) practice to which it puts an end.⁴³ Indeed, the cessation just signals that the practice now appears irrational, immoral, indefensible, or unintelligible other than as something that should be stopped. The cessation, that is, signals that any continuation of the practice threatens sense.⁴⁴ However, marking a threat to sense does not yet provide us with a way of warding off the threat. For, if we have no way of making sense of why we ever did what now seems to us irrational (foot-binding, dueling), then we have no way of seeing the meaning of our having stopped. That is, we have not yet connected the duration of the activity to its cessation. Indeed, the cessation is required inasmuch as we are unable to make that connection (between past endurance and present disavowal) intelligible. We are left not knowing how we got here. Hence the way in which such cessations are usually treated, implausibly, as the historical discovery of some moral fact (equality, dignity) to which our ancestors were somehow blind.

Of course, we could simply deem such practices (e.g., the slave trade or foot-binding) to be expressions of some particular social world or to be the result of a historically contingent power dynamic. No doubt a number of historical facts or ideological motivations could be uncovered or realized. But to explain foot-binding just by assuming it to be expressive of the values of a given social world only presses the real question we want answered: How did those values come to be held as such, and what does it say about us such that we ever held them to be values? Can we connect who we are to who we have been or say how we got here from there? Such questions, I am suggesting, turned out not to be answerable by means of foot-binding or dueling—and their inability to explain themselves, as it were, is part of the causal explanation for their cessation. But if our activities turn out not to be self-explanatory, if nothing we do can be responsive

to questions we have about that doing, then we will find ourselves unable to give reasons for anything we do (we would be left pointing at contingencies and causal processes).

Making sense of what we do—thereby seeing ourselves as acting rationally or freely (rather than just driven this way and that by forces beyond our reckoning)—thus requires a reflective stance on at least some of our practices, earned through something other than the cessation or continuation of those practices—something other than either their objectification as past or their subjectification as a continuous experience. Or so I now want to argue.

4

Here, I think we can productively return to the epilogues themselves as concluding (though not ‘stopping’ or merely parodic) moments that are only possible within an activity that remains neither only subjective nor only objective. The epilogues, I propose, manage to do something other than present Hegel or Prospero as either carrying on (by, say, ironically or cynically playing the role of philosopher or artist) or ceasing altogether (breaking away, giving up, breaking with the past). Rather, they reach their own conclusions.

Whether an activity—such as drama or teaching philosophy—can be brought to a conclusion from within, as part of its own doing, ought to be seen as a crucial test of our freedom and rationality (a test of Spirit’s self-determination as Absolute, to stick with Hegel’s way of talking). Achieving a conclusion to an activity—rather than just stopping or being impeded by external factors or offering self-styled parody—demonstrates the freedom of that activity by showing it to be self-limiting, self-determining. At the same time, achieving such conclusions can also make some kind of sense of the activity that is being brought to its close, if these conclusions manage to appear demonstrably earned by whatever is being done. Perhaps only if we can bring our activities to a close in this way, can we make sense of them as both rational and free.

To make clearer what I mean, let me contrast these epilogue-conclusions to the kind of practical self-awareness—call it skill or technique—that characterizes the way in which an accomplished orator will know when and how to stop speaking or the way an accomplished sailor will bring a ship into port. In the case of technique—as with the teleological character of craftsmanship described by Aristotle, for instance—the end of the activity lies outside the scope of the activity itself.⁴⁵ By bringing a ship into port,

one simply stops sailing. One cannot cease sailing by continuing to sail, any more than one can stop speaking by continuing to speak. Indeed, inasmuch as knowing how and when to stop an activity belongs to what it is to do that activity skillfully or properly, the art of the activity entails its own self-restriction or self-restraint.

This is the point, remember, that Hegel also wished to make about the historical limits of all classical art. Namely, that the historical limitation of classical art is its practical restrictedness to its own sphere, to its own status as art (to technique or craft, we might as well say). Hegel's point is not that there are historical limits to the material-practical production of classical art, as if the limits in question were somehow decided by periodization or chronology. Just think of neoclassical revivals. The point, rather, is that such art can still be skillfully produced today precisely inasmuch as such art restricts itself (no matter the date on the calendar) to its own status as art or craft. It is this practical self-restriction of classical art to its own sphere that, for Hegel, marks classical art's historical limit.⁴⁶ The persistent possibility of neoclassical revivals down to our own day shows classical art to be past—unable to enter the broader stream of historically transforming practices (economic, political, philosophical, social) without losing its “classical-ness.” Classical art or symbolic art, we might say, are artistic practices that fail to adequately thematize their own conclusion—they can only carry on or stop.⁴⁷

Classical and symbolic art are past, as I suggested earlier, only from a historical-philosophical vantage point that can plausibly see art as having transcended itself from within its own sphere (as having become something other than symbolic, or restrictedly classical, as genuinely transformed by new social realities and objective historical transformations). And—equally—such a historical vantage point is only possible if human activities (like art) have indeed developed beyond their own self-restrictedness. A historical vantage from which modern art can be said to have any reality at all is, to put it another way, possible only if modern art really does realize itself as entwined with other historical practices—rather than just maintain itself by defending its own status (or by knowing when to stop). Likewise, art can be said to have transcended itself from within its own sphere only if such a historical vantage really turns out to have been achieved. Everything hangs, in sum, on whether we can see our activities as having developed in ways for which we can now give some retrospective (historical-narrative-philosophical) account from a vantage that is not outside or above or beyond those same activities—but from a vantage that is in part their direct outcome.

This is why both Prospero-the-artist and Hegel-the-philosopher foreground their respective activities as entailing some sort of historical development or process or realization in which they themselves are implicated. In Prospero's case, this is manifest not only in the historical retrospective on past events that he divulges to Miranda, Antonio, Caliban, Ariel, and others over the course of *The Tempest*—but also in the way in which everything Prospero does in the play is performed with an acute sense of timing or historical occasion.⁴⁸ In the case of Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art*—or, more generally, in the case of the systematic ambitions of Hegel's *Encyclopedia*—a historical-narrative horizon structures even the most seemingly analytic-categorical distinctions.⁴⁹ Again, both Hegel and Prospero ask for applause in order to affirm a culmination of these respective developments—to affirm their having been developments or processes in view of which some sense can be made of the present moment (“Now at the end . . .”). Moreover, both Prospero and Hegel look back on these processes as involving both whatever happened along the way (objectively) in view of some historical context—words and deeds that express a particular society's values and beliefs, its roles and norms—and as involving the particular viewpoints and experiences of participating agents (subjectively: we in the audience to both play and lecture, for instance).

But both Hegel and Shakespeare (or Prospero) seem to think that what they are doing—as dramatists, artists, or philosophers—can somehow render both the objective and subjective sides more intelligible to each other. That is, they seem to think that the social activities in which they are engaged—art, drama, philosophy, teaching—are capable of arriving at some kind of self-understanding through the activity itself. And they seem to think, further, that this feature of what they are doing merits the special attention for which the epilogues call. (Hence, the “here is what we have been doing” tone of Hegel's last words to his students.)

It is true that some kind of practical self-reflection is also afforded in what Hegel called classical art. For instance, a Greek temple, on Hegel's account, presents some understanding of itself as a freestanding structure built according to rational design and not the demands of nature, inasmuch as it self-consciously displays the fluting of the columns (“look! I am a column, cut by intentional design to this height and width”). Likewise, as already intimated, it is true that one can become aware of the role one is playing in a given social context just by carrying out that role. An actor can even start to act and speak in a self-conscious or stylized way.⁵⁰

However, the kind of self-understanding or self-reflexivity that Hegel and Prospero think they have earned in their epilogues is, I think, of a

different order. Both think that they have not only arrived at a point at which they, and we, can now see better what we have been up to all along (making art, teaching philosophy). They also think—unlike the Greek column or our self-aware actor—that new possibilities within the practice, beyond either carrying on or stopping altogether, are now available in light of the historical vantage achieved in the epilogues. For the epilogues show how we can transform or direct our activities from within, how we can do more than carry on with tradition or stop altogether. In this sense, they demonstrate the way in which a provisional freedom and self-directedness of our practices can be achieved.

Perhaps the best way to conclude this essay, then, is with a reminder of how teaching itself has come to mean something other than a relation between teacher and pupil, master and apprentice, in which mastery of a skill is either transmitted, or else seen as no longer worthy of repetition. Teaching in the humanities is no longer authorized solely by the tradition it transmits, or by reference of the mastery of a skill set embodied in its teachers. Of course, we still practice and teach art (or philosophy) within something like a teacher-student framework. But the value of whatever is taught is now wholly dependent on its reception. Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art* exist for us, quite literally, thanks to Hegel's students; and this is not just a contingent feature of their transmission, I think, but a fundamental feature of those lectures, of Hegel's philosophy. Just as Prospero accosts us on our way out of the playhouse, to find out what we are going to do next, so too, Hegel's students discover that the success or failure of the lectures they have followed lies not on the syllabus's last date, but in the "higher and indestructible" bond reached in a course's conclusion.

NOTES

1. The two "epilogues" have been compared before; I ask the reader to entertain the plausibility of the comparison. See Robert Pippin, *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 142–43, and Katrin Trüstedt, *Die Komödie der Tragödie: Shakespeares "Sturm" am Umschlagplatz von Mythos und Moderne, Rache und Recht, Tragik und Spiel* (Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2011), 65. I also discuss Prospero's speech in light of Hegel's Aesthetics, in Paul A. Kottman "The Charm Dissolves Apace: Shakespeare and the Self-Dissolution of Drama," in *Shakespeare and Continental Philosophy*, edited by Jennifer Ann Bates (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), chap. 1.

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 2, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1236–37. The authenticity

of this text—based on lecture notes from the last three lecture courses—is not an issue I take up here. It seems worth saying, however, that the lecture notes on which critical editions of Hegel’s *Aesthetics* are based are roughly as much “Hegel’s” as the texts on which critical editions of Shakespeare’s *Tempest* are “Shakespeare’s.” (Just as Hegel’s Lectures were published several years after his death, so the first edition of *The Tempest* appeared in the First Folio of 1623, seven years after Shakespeare’s death.) For a recent assessment of the textual issues, see G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art: The Hotho Transcript of the 1823 Berlin Lectures*, trans. Robert F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); see also the discussion in Allen Speight’s review of this publication: <https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/58639-lectures-on-the-philosophy-of-art-the-hotho-transcript-of-the-1823-berlin-lectures/>.

3. Following an interpretive tradition that seems to have begun with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, I provisionally conflate Prospero and Shakespeare, but leave for another discussion the interesting questions raised by this conflation.

4. I once saw the tenor Luciano Pavarotti appear on stage before the start of an opera to bask in the ovation of an audience that had yet to hear him sing that evening. In that case, the ovation was clearly an acknowledgment of Pavarotti and his career, not of the performance in which we were about to share. So our participation in the evening’s achievement was not implied by our applause. However, I am suggesting that our participation and collective progress is essential to the meaning of Hegel’s and Shakespeare’s epilogues.

5. By this, I mean what Hegel describes in terms of the standpoint of reason (*Vernunft*) as distinct from what he calls the understanding (*Verstand*).

6. The single most helpful essay on Hegel and Shakespeare remains A. C. Bradley, “Hegel’s Theory of Tragedy,” in *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (New York: St. Martins, 1965). See also the essays by Henry and Anne Paolucci on Shakespeare and Hegel reprinted in their *Hegelian Literary Perspectives* (Smyrna, Del.: Griffon House, 2002). See also Walter Kaufmann, *Tragedy and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 279–88. More recent contributions include Jennifer Bates, *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010); J. M. Bernstein, “Tragedy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Sara Macdonald, *Finding Freedom: Hegel’s Philosophy and the Emancipation of Women* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008). I have also made attempts, in *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); in “Defying the Stars,” in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2012); and in “The Charm Dissolves Apace.”

7. And in the passage just cited, Hegel distinguishes his “one aim” from what he calls “mere criticism of works of art.”

8. See, for example, the remarks on *Macbeth* in “The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate,” in *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 182–301, or the writings collected in *Hegel on Tragedy*, edited by Henry Paolucci (New York: Doubleday, 1962).

9. This is to say nothing about the broader status of what Allen Speight calls Hegel’s “literary borrowings” in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and other works (which include borrowings from Shakespeare). However, my focus here is on ways in which Hegel’s philosophical activity requires a “Shakespearean” dramatic aesthetics. For helpful discussions of literature in Hegel, see Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Robert Pippin, “The Status of Literature in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*,” in *Inventions of the Imagination: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Imaginary since Romanticism*, ed. Richard T. Gray, Nicholas Halmi, Gary Handwerk, Michael A. Rosenthal, and Klaus Vieweg (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011); Benjamin Rutter, *Hegel and the Modern Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 212–69; and Gustav-H. H. Falke, *Begriffne Geschichte* (Berlin: Lukas, 1996).

10. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 2:1227.

11. In his fine book on Hegel’s *Lectures on Fine Art*, Benjamin Rutter says this well when he notes that, for Hegel, art is not “a match for the culture, a mirror in the road, but the matrix for its self-understanding as a coherent form of life.” *Hegel and the Modern Arts*, 2.

12. Hegel makes this point in the very same passage. He notes that in “the religious sphere” and “the political sphere” the “interests of individuals” are less and less “absorbed” by the “substantial elements” of family, church, state—but that dramatic-poetic-artistic works establish “the right of subjectivity” as “the sole subject-matter” in a way that is not reducible to the increasing privileging of subjectivity in, say, the objective political arena. Shakespeare, in short, can show us what subjectivity *is* or *can be* in ways that political history or religious traditions on their own cannot. See the discussion in Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 2:1223–24.

13. For a discussion of this “enlivening” or “life” (*Lebendigkeit*) see Pippin, “Status of Literature in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.” Pippin also notes that “two familiar disputes about the ‘dispensability’ of art in the modern age and the dispensability of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* for (Hegel’s) ‘system’ are deeply linked” (109).

14. Hegel repeatedly emphasizes that art “invites” a philosophy of art and that the philosophy of art is itself a result of art’s own development as a historical practice (especially, its having become modern). For instance: “The

philosophy of art is a greater need in our day than it was in the days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is.” Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:111.

15. Of course, Hegel’s echo of Shakespeare could be taken as nothing more than a means to summarize his main points, or as a way to show his love of Shakespeare—or Hegel could just be ending with a “citation” the way many orators do. But I am not convinced that these “rhetorical” strategies explain what Hegel is doing here. There is, I think, a logical as well as a rhetorical affinity.

16. That Shakespeare’s *Tempest* was already being read as an allegory for Shakespeare’s reflection on his own artistic practice is evidenced in Goethe’s reworking of *The Tempest* in *Faust II*, which was being composed in the years that Hegel was lecturing on art in Berlin (and meeting fairly regularly with Goethe). For a recent assessment, see Charlotte Lee, “‘Durch Wunderkraft Erschienen’: Affinities between Goethe’s *Faust* and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*,” in *Modern Language Review* 107, no. 1 (2012): 198–210. This reading had already been proposed by Coleridge, who called Prospero “the very Shakespeare himself, as it were, of the tempest.” See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Lectures 1808–1819 On Literature*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 2:269.

17. Consider Josiah Royce’s suggestion that Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is a bildungsroman, or Hegel’s own frequent characterizations of his enterprise as the self-education of consciousness. See Josiah Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), 147–50.

18. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 2:1236, my emphasis.

19. The discussions are not as long as those found in, say, Winckelmann’s *History of Ancient Art*, but they are nonetheless striking for their attention to detail.

20. Hegel’s interest in Shakespeare was hardly fleeting—it was a lifelong fascination. Hegel grappled with Shakespearean drama from his earliest writings through his Berlin lectures on art in the 1820s. By “earliest writings,” I mean not only the remarks on Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* from Hegel’s early text “The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate,” but also—as mentioned—the very earliest text of Hegel’s to have come down to us, a rewriting of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, composed when Hegel was a teenager. Terry Pinkard, in his biography of Hegel, recounts that “One of [Hegel’s] teachers, a Mr. Loeffler, gave him at the age of eight a present of Shakespeare’s works translated by Eschenberg, with the advice that although he would not understand them at that point, he would soon learn to understand them. (Hegel recorded

years later in his teenage diary a laudatory remembrance of Loeffler when he died.)” Pinkard further claims that Hegel read some Shakespeare in English: “[Hegel] took great interest in the offerings in the various theaters in Paris. He was even able to see the great English actor Charles Kemble, and the legendary Irish actress Henrietta Smithson, perform Shakespeare at the newly opened English Theater in Paris; he followed the plays by reading along in the English editions he had procured.” See Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5, 551–52. For more on the claim that Hegel read Shakespeare in English, see Bates, *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination*, 20.

21. Hegel quotes a German translation of Shakespeare in a section of the *Lectures on Fine Art* called “Symbolism of the Comparative Art-Form.” The earliest text by Hegel to have survived is a “rewriting” of *Julius Caesar* called “A Conversation of Three” written in 1785. See *Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2002). But in those instances Hegel seems to have been most interested in evidencing the way in which Shakespeare’s language reveals the achievement of a kind of self-reflection, or self-distancing from the immediacy of passionate feeling—hence “the freedom” to present one’s own “fate to oneself in an image.” See Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:418–20. As Pippin has observed, Hegel’s citations of “literary texts” (Schiller’s “Freundschaft” is Pippin’s main focus, in part because Hegel alters the citation of Schiller) can be taken to “serve an appropriately double purpose . . . the *citation* gives evidence for the indispensability of the living, aesthetic dimension of experience for any philosophical account of norms . . . and the *alteration* . . . gives evidence that the completion and *Aufhebung* of aesthetic representation by philosophical reflection is just as indispensable.” The citation, in other words, shows that the last word “turns out to be neither Schiller’s nor Hegel’s alone, making a case by its very presence for the indispensability of a reflective and philosophically informed attention to historical and living *geistige Wirklichkeit* for any genuine philosophy worthy of the name.” Pippin, “Status of Literature in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*,” 119.

22. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 2:731. Similarly, the passages in which Hegel cites Shakespeare directly occur in these earlier sections of the *Lectures*.

23. Even where Hegel’s discussion of romantic art—as, for instance, in Flemish painting—seems detailed, it turns on a discussion of thematic content that is being “worked out” in a painterly practice that spans numerous works: for instance, Christ’s childhood or maternal love.

24. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 78–79. Hegel also refers to the “infinite subjectivity of the Idea” as “absolute inwardness” that “cannot freely

and truly shape itself outwardly on condition of remaining moulded into a bodily existence.” Ibid. Passages such as these can make it seem as though, for Hegel, the “defect” of classical art was its sheer embodiment or sensuousness, and that modern art achieves an “inwardness” (in music or poetry) that is not restricted to the sphere of embodied sensuousness. But, I think, Hegel’s meaning is rather that classical art restricts itself to external, sensuous embodiment—and, hence, fails to fully enliven spirit’s freedom. The relative unrestrictedness of modern art does not entail, on my reading of Hegel’s meaning, that the freedom of *Geist* somehow entails the overcoming of sensuous embodiment *tout court*. This becomes clear, especially, once we see that by inwardness (as in the inner life touched by music) Hegel still means inwardness as bodily movement (the stirrings of the heart, say)—though this “inwardness” cannot be presented by means of external embodiment alone (the outward appearance of the human body).

25. For good discussions, see Terry Pinkard, “Symbolic, Classical, and Romantic Art,” in *Hegel and the Arts*, edited by Stephen Houlgate (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press), 12–16; and especially Julia Peters, *Hegel on Beauty* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

26. Hegel writes: “Romantic art is the self-transcendence of art but within its own sphere and in the form of art itself.” Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:80.

27. It is in this sense that the historical and systematic ambitions of Hegel’s philosophy intertwine. Note: Hegel’s point is *not* that this historical necessity was somehow “driving” the history of art from the beginning in a teleological or divinely guided process. Rather, inasmuch as we can now see the development from symbolic to classical to modern as having been unavoidable, the “necessity” adheres in our sense-making practices as retrospectively reflective (art, philosophy) and not in anything “beyond” or “above” those practices.

28. For a start, it is up to us to discern, decide, or debate what will even count as features of modern-romantic art. For instance, if Shakespearean tragedies all shared certain inherent, generic characteristics, then it would be difficult to distinguish between *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* and *Othello*—but of course we all know that each of these is an entirely different play; each brings to light new features or expressive possibilities for Shakespearean tragedy, helping us to better discern the art form as such, to better see its purview or expressive task. Shakespearean tragedies show what they are, as an art form, in light of one another. For the same reason, though it is unconventional to say so, we should probably regard Shakespearean tragedy not just as a finite, canonical collection of plays by William Shakespeare (*Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and so forth) but as a novel, modern artistic practice—instanced with special power in a range of works by Shakespeare, but still

practicable by others afterward. Shakespeare may have been the first, or the most successful or the most indispensable, to work in the medium of Shakespearean tragedy, but he was not the last. See my “What Is Shakespearean Tragedy?” in *The Oxford Handbook to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

29. This finds an interesting parallel in Ingrid Vermeulen’s account of the emergence of modern art history (in Winckelmann and others). See my remarks on Vermeulen in notes 2, 5, and 41 in the introduction to this volume.

30. None of this means that such a formal analysis of modernist works like Shakespearean drama is, in principle, impossible. Rather, the point is that to the extent to which we are still working through the same collective self-conception—the same “Idea”—as Shakespeare, we are not yet in a position to see modern art as a collection of reified or “past” forms.

31. There is also running debate among Hegel’s readers about the dispensability of modern art, in general and for Hegel. The contours of this debate are nicely presented in the introduction to Rutter, *Hegel on the Modern Arts*. I suppose my remarks here place me in the company of those Rutter calls the “optimistic” readers of Hegel; but I will have to wait for another occasion to qualify that placement.

32. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:111

33. *Ibid.*, 15–16.

34. Following Kristin Gjesdal’s suggestions in her contribution to this volume, I believe that J. G. Herder’s “Shakespeare” essay might be taken as anticipating this “science” with his hermeneutics. In the *Encyclopedia* Hegel’s account of art seems analytical rather than historical, but—as Robert Pippin points out—the historical distinction between symbolic, classical, and romantic structures the account in the *Encyclopedia*, too. See “The Absence of Aesthetics in Hegel’s Aesthetics,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Frederick Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 395n4.

35. One example of this intertwinement would be the way in which Shakespeare’s dramatic art—like all of Elizabethan-Jacobean theatrical culture—was necessarily bound up with the economic activity of the playhouse, the liturgical activity of the city, the power politics of the Royal Court and of London, the itinerant traveling of players, the artistic life of scholarly centers like Cambridge and so forth.

36. Both are processes or developments that cannot be formally described from the outside, in the third personal. Is a plot summary of the *Tempest* even possible, for instance, in the same way one can call to mind the *mythos* of Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*?

37. Art “only fulfills its supreme task when it has placed itself in the same sphere as religion and philosophy, and when it is simply one way of bringing to our minds and expressing the Divine, the deepest interests of mankind, and the most comprehensive truths of spirit.” Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, 1:7.

38. Everything Prospero “does” in the *Tempest* is so peculiar, when compared to what the other characters in the play “do” (gather wood, sail ships, conduct politics, engage in economic activity, instrumentally pursue various goals). What *is* Prospero doing, achieving, bringing about?

39. Art, religion, and philosophy are—after all—*also* social practices that belong to the sphere of objective spirit. That is, they are all culturally specific rule-based practices that have been followed in certain societies at certain times.

40. Elsewhere, I have argued that Shakespearean drama might be fruitfully understood as presenting the historical failure of crucial regimes of “objective spirit”—military life, family or kinship roles, economic activity, monarchical rule, feudal life—as suffered through (or, *as*) the “subjective experiences” of individual human beings (Hamlet or Lear). Paul A. Kottman, *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

41. Shakespeare makes this patently clear by setting the *Tempest* not just in a particular social world (“Milan” and “Naples” seem intentionally vague historical locales in this play), but on a island where something like the fate of human sociality itself seems to need to be worked out.

42. A persistent question for those interested in the law is whether certain laws—say, those guaranteeing freedom of speech—are just specific cultural mores that signal the local vitality and customary morality of some historical community or whether the rule of law also installs or founds normative ways of life by animating principles (morals) that can find allegiance beyond the confines of any particular community whose vitality it signals.

43. The examples of foot-binding and dueling are analyzed in Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011). Unlike Appiah, however, I understand the demise of these practices to entail not a moral revolution, but rather the way in which these practices become unsustainable because of their failure to explain themselves, to make any sense at all of the suffering they cause. They look like moral revolutions only retrospectively, in light of that failure.

44. Just as, conversely, to carry on with a social practice in a self-conscious manner—as in Renaissance courtier culture—is to be unable to make sense of what it would mean to stop the practice or radically transform it, and hence to live out a social life in which hypocrisy or some kind of self-

alienation or even self-hatred becomes endemic. See my analysis of Hamlet and Laertes and the self-alienation of courtier life in chapter 2 of *Tragic Conditions in Shakespeare*.

45. In *poiesis*, for example, *energeia* (actuality) is external to *dynamis* (potentiality) such that the accomplishment of, or conclusion to, such activities lies outside the activity itself, or marks its end. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1050a30–35.

46. This is why Hegel does not think that classical art is the same thing as, say, the Greek world. Classical Greece, rather, can be characterized by its commitment to beautiful artworks—its having held (what Hegel is calling) classical art in such high regard.

47. Or, undergo periodic revivals—as in neoclassical movements.

48. For instance: Prospero, “Now does my project gather to a head:/My charms crack not; my spirits obey; and time/ Goes upright with his carriage. How’s the day?” (5.1.1–3).

49. Think, for instance, of the “symbolic, classical, romantic” categories in the *Aesthetics*, or of the role of “world history” in Hegel’s “system.” And then there is also the retrospectively grasped “development” of Hegel’s own lecture course, to which he refers over and over.

50. This is, again, a point that Hegel had made earlier—precisely with reference to Shakespeare.