

Fine Art as the “Art of Living”

Johann Gottfried Herder’s *Calligone* Reconsidered from a Somaesthetic Point of View

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Abstract: *Inspired by Shusterman’s concept of philosophy as an “embodied art of living,” this paper revisits Johann Gottfried Herder’s late Calligone (1800) from a somaesthetic point of view, arguing firstly that Herder’s theory of the agreeable and the beautiful is based on his conception of aesthetics as a theory of the senses; and secondly that Herder’s theory of art focuses on the relationship between art and life. Calligone should accordingly be re-evaluated, this paper maintains, in light of a recent development in aesthetics: from the philosophy of art to what is known as somaesthetics, aisthetics, or everyday aesthetics.*

Keywords: *the agreeable and the beautiful, the feeling sense of touch and the groping sense of touch, the subtle senses and the media, Pygmalion of the self, art of living.*

Explaining how he coined the term “somaesthetics,” Richard Shusterman once said that “new names can be helpful both in stimulating new thinking and in reorganizing and reanimating older insights.” Based on the Greek and Roman idea of philosophy as an “embodied art of living,” somaesthetics has succeeded in reorganizing and reanimating older, often forgotten discourses on *sôma* and *aisthêsis*.¹ Inspired by Shusterman’s concept, this paper revisits Johann Gottfried Herder’s late *Calligone* (1800) from a somaesthetic point of view.

A Metacritique on the Critique of Pure Reason (1799) and the *Calligone* are the major works of Herder’s last years: the former posed against the theoretical philosophy of his former mentor Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) and the latter against the aesthetic theory of the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790). However, few attempts have been made to analyze Herder’s late contributions. In particular, little attention has been given to the *Calligone*,² which

¹ Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*, p. 5.

² As far as I know, there are only three books that thematically deal with the *Calligone*, namely: Jacoby, *Herders und Kants Ästhetik*, Fugate, *The Psychological Basis of Herder’s Aesthetics*, and Osterman, *Die Idee des Schöpferischen in Herders Kalligone*. In the last few decades, however, several articles have been devoted to the study of the *Calligone*. For example, in “Free Play and True Well-Being: Herder’s Critique of Kant’s Aesthetics,” Paul Guyer, a renowned Kant scholar, reconstitutes Herder’s main arguments in the *Calligone*, comparing them with Kant’s argument in the third critique. In the field of musicology, Mark Evan Bonds argues that the *Calligone* constitutes a significant step toward the so-called metaphysics of the instrumental music. His thesis that originates in Hugo Goldschmidt’s *Musikästhetik im 18. Jahrhundert und ihre Beziehungen zu seinem Kunstschaffen*, 186, opposes the 1972 assertion of Carl Dahlhaus that “the metaphysics of the instrumental music

is likely due to the following reasons. The first is intrinsic as the *Calligone* is, like *Critical Forests* (1769), a polemical work whose construction is largely based on the work it criticizes. It is therefore not easy to discern and reconstruct Herder's own arguments. In his letter to J. W. L. Gleim dated June 13, 1800, Herder expresses his desire to "put away from the second edition of the *Calligone* everything that does not belong to it,"³ i.e., criticism of the third critique. The second edition, however, never appeared.

The second reason for the neglect of Herder's late works is historical. The decade 1790–1800, marked by the publication of the third critique and the *Calligone*, was a most significant period in the development of modern aesthetics. Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of the Human Being* (1795) avers that we are "human" thanks to "aesthetic play."⁴ Friedrich Schlegel's essays and fragments, and above all the *Conversation on Poetry* (1800), serve as manifestos of German Romanticism. Finally, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's *System of Transcendental Philosophy* (1800) insists that "aesthetic intuition" or "art" is the "only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy."⁵ These works have in common a utilization of aesthetics, or the aesthetic, to overcome Kant's critical dualism. In comparison, Herder's *Calligone*, which is primarily directed at Kant's critical philosophy, seems to have been left out of the received historical narrative.

At issue in Herder's criticism of Kant's aesthetic theory is that he accepts neither the strict distinction between the beautiful, the agreeable, and the good, nor the opposition between nature and art. These distinctions underlie Kant's third critique and its dualistic foundations. Herder, in contrast, whose view is often regarded as "monism,"⁶ does not approve of such dualistic distinctions. This does not mean that Herder wants to undermine all distinctions. Rather he aims at restructuring or rearranging these distinctions according to his monistic view. As I shall argue, Herder's theory of the agreeable and the beautiful is based on his conception of aesthetics as a theory of the senses; and his theory of art focuses on the relationship between art and life. This would suggest that Herder's *Calligone* should be reevaluated in light of the contemporary transformations of aesthetics: from the philosophy of fine art to somaesthetics, aisthetics, or everyday aesthetics.

1. Aesthetics as a Theory of the Senses

In the third critique, Kant distinguishes between three kinds of the feeling of pleasure: 1. the passive and private pleasure that depends on given sensations (e.g., colors or tones), i.e., the pleasure of the agreeable; 2. the universally-valid pleasure that presupposes a given representation but originates from the free play of our cognitive powers, i.e., the pleasure of the beautiful; and 3. the universally-valid pleasure that accompanies a judgment of the perfection of an object, i.e., the pleasure of the good (Kant 5: 209, 217).⁷ The beautiful and the agreeable are similar insofar as they do not presuppose any concept of an object, whereas the beautiful and the good

was quite unknown to Herder" (Dahlhaus, *Klassische und Romantische Musikästhetik*, p. 95). See Bonds, "Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century," pp. 387–420, here pp. 409–410.

3 See Adler, "Herders Ästhetik als Rationalitätstyp," pp. 131–139, here p. 131.

4 Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, pp. 80, 135.

5 Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 231.

6 See Nisbet, *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science*, pp. 4, 109.

7 Kant's works are cited in the body of the text according to the volume and page number in *Immanuel Kants Schriften*, Ausgabe der königlichen preußischen Ausgabe der Wissenschaften (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1902–). Translations are from the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, series editors Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992–).

are similar insofar as their pleasure is not private but universally valid. Kant’s argument is based on his dualistic position: the distinction between the subjective and the objective; and between matter and form, i.e., between what is given and what generates order.

To Kant’s distinctions Herder responds: “No one doubts that the words ‘agreeable, beautiful, and good’ designate different concepts. In all our notions and feelings we are of the *one* nature that thinks, senses, and desires; these related concepts must, therefore, share borders. The question is how these concepts border on each other, how they are divided and connected. Mere oppositions do not solve riddles; much less do the arbitrary barriers of words” (Herder 8: 672–3 n.).⁸ Thus, Herder reduces these three concepts into *one* single nature, thereby rearticulating them anew based on his conception of aesthetics as a theory of the senses.

Herder’s definition of the agreeable reads as follows: “What our sense readily accepts [*annehmen*], what is acceptable to it [*genehm*], what it readily approves [*genehmigen*]*—*that is what is agreeable [*angenehm*]” (8: 664). Compared with Kant’s rather dry definition that “the agreeable is that which pleases the senses in sensation” (Kant 5: 205), Herder’s definition is highlighted by his linguistic insight that the adjective *angenehm* (agreeable) and the verb *annehmen* (accept) have the same origin, which cannot be adequately rendered in English. By the expression “readily accept” [*gern annehmen*] Herder understands the following: “It is what maintains, promotes and enhances the feeling of our being, it is what is *in harmony* with it that each of our senses readily accepts, assimilates, and finds agreeable” (Herder 8: 667). In short, by feeling something as agreeable, we perceive our “well-being [*Wohlsein*], health” anew (8: 667–68).

Why is Herder so interested in the agreeable? There are two reasons. First, well-being is striven towards both by the human being and nature as a whole. Following the order of nature, the human being seeks the agreeable. Second, assimilation is fundamental for human beings who assimilate not only the agreeable, but also the beautiful (8: 689, 712). The “concept” is also that which “we assimilate from an object in cognition” (8: 732).

Here one should clarify what Herder means by “concept” [*Begriff*]. In section six of the third critique, Kant avers that “there is no transition from concepts to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure,” concluding on this basis that the determining ground of the judgment of taste is not a “concept” but a “feeling,” which is also the reason why the beautiful and the agreeable are essentially distinguished from the good (Kant 5: 211). Herder, on the other hand, insists that we “distinguish concept and feeling only by means of abstraction” and that we are “always conscious of this innate transition. [...] Even a fanatic does not descend so deep into the dark ground of his soul that he believes that he feels—or even judges—without any concept” (Herder 8: 733). That is, concepts pertain to all activities of our souls, i.e., not only in the higher levels like thinking and willing but also in the deepest sensory levels.⁹ For Herder, it is concepts that create a scaffolding upon which the sensory-intellectual human being is engaged in the world via senses, imagination, intellect, and will.

The “ground of the soul” is not a chaos that eludes concepts, as Kant argues; it is rather organized by concepts in a human manner (as a kind of *Gestalt*). Thus, Herder argues that according to Kantian dualism where only form can generate order in matter, matter itself would be a “*Tartarus* without concepts” and we could not hope to “reach the light of concepts” (8: 734).

8 Herder’s works are cited in the body of the text according to the volume and page number in *Werke*, 10 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985–2000). Translations are mine.

9 See Adler, “Fundus Animae – der Grund der Seele: Zur Gnoseologie des Dunklen in der Aufklärung,” pp. 197–220 and Otabe, “Der Grund der Seele: Über Entstehung und Verlauf eines ästhetischen Diskurses im 18. Jahrhundert,” pp. 763–774.

Rather, matter is already formed or form resides in matter. Thus “each sense is organized so as to assimilate one out of many [*ein Eins aus Vielem*]; otherwise it would not be an organized sense of the soul” (8: 733–34).

I now discuss how Herder relates the agreeable to the beautiful. In his theory of the agreeable, Herder thinks primarily of the “darkest senses” (8: 676) i.e., “the sense of smell and taste” (8: 668) as well as “the sense of touch” (8: 668). Both senses pertain to “maintaining our well-being” (8: 672). Among these two senses, however, the sense of touch alone has the function of grasping the form of an object: “By injustice the sense of touch is counted as a rude sense. [...] Not only as a helper and tester it assists sight and hearing; it further provides sight with its firmest basic concepts [*Grundbegriffe*] without which the eyes would perceive only surfaces, contours, and colors” (8: 677).

Here two points should be noted. First, the sense of touch is understood in two ways. While the sense of touch is closed in a subject, it is open to the world when it grasps the forms of an object,¹⁰ thereby mediating between the so-called lower senses (smell and taste) and the so-called higher senses (sight and hearing). Herder calls the touch of sense that is closed in a subject the “feeling sense of touch” [*das fühlende Gefühl*] (8: 676) or the “rude, and self-preserving sense of touch” (8: 677) and the touch of sense that is open to the world the “groping sense of touch” [*das tastende Gefühl*] (8: 677), or the “understanding sense of touch” (8: 689). Certainly the “groping sense of touch” is primarily located in the grasping hand, but it pervades the whole body. The human being is “endowed with the sense peculiar to it, i.e., the groping sense of touch in its whole shape” (8: 751). The groping sense of touch is peculiar to the human being because it is distinguished from other animals by its “hand” (8: 751).

Second, it is necessary to investigate the relation between the senses of touch and sight more closely. Triggered by Molyneux’s problem and following Berkeley’s *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709),¹¹ Herder insists that what we properly perceive by sight are flat surfaces with colors and that our perception of form is only possible when the sense of touch that grasps an object underlies the sense of sight. “A man born blind whose vision was restored” must, therefore, “adjust a visible world with a tangible one,” which is, however, the case not only with a man born blind whose vision was restored but also with “children and the visually impaired” (8: 691). With the help of the sense of touch we learn to see forms such that we come to “see also gropingly” (8: 751), i.e., vision can replace the sense of touch to see an object haptically as a three-dimensional object without the aid of the sense of touch. “Being founded on the sense of touch, our images of vision [*Gesichtsideen*]¹² stand on their own basis” (8: 751).

Being open to the world, the groping sense of touch (or the vision under its guidance) grasps “shapes in certain numbers and measures as conditions of rest and motion” (8: 752). “We live in a well-ordered and well-shaped world in which the results of the natural laws in gentle shapes manifest to us *beauty as corporeal perfection that is harmonious with itself and with our sense of touch*” (8: 687). An object is beautiful when the double condition that it is harmonious with itself and with our sense of touch is fulfilled.¹³ In contrast, the “agreeable” fulfills only the single condition that it promotes the well-being of a subject that perceives an object. The sentence “X is agreeable” seems to determine an object X; but it only signifies that the well-being of the subject

10 See Jacoby, *Herders und Kants Ästhetik*, p. 107.

11 See Morgan, *Molyneux’s Question: Vision, Touch, and the Philosophy of Perception*, pp. 1–5, 59–62.

12 Herder distinguishes *Begriffe* from *Ideen*, etymologically ascribing the former to the sense of touch and the latter to the sense of sight.

13 The meaning of this harmony will be analyzed later.

is promoted by object X. “For the sake of brevity, we attributed to the object what belongs only to the feeling subject” (8: 725). On the other hand, the sentence “X is beautiful” points out not only a subjective condition but also actually determines the object X. Despite these differences, the beautiful and the agreeable do not exclude each other, as Kant claims, because a beautiful object is also agreeable in that it is harmonious with a perceiving subject and promotes the well-being of that subject. Accordingly, the agreeable and the beautiful form two layers: a base and an upper layer, respectively.

Next I address the question of how Herder distinguishes the higher senses from the lower senses. According to Herder, in the lower senses “subject and object are, as it were, one in sensation”—we find in our “subtle organs, vision and hearing, *το μεταξυ*,¹⁴ a medium that enters between an object and a feeling subject” (8: 708), thus enabling remote perceptions: “Both media,” i.e., “light and sound,” have “an immutable rule that is harmonious with the organ”—“color wheel” and “tone scale,” respectively (8: 709–710, 695).

Any given medium faces us with a new world. As for sight, Herder remarks that “Vision gives <a> not only a new language, a shortened alphabet of the sense of touch that gropes in darkness, [...] but also —a sacred power! The omnipresent light transforms us, as it were, into omnipresent beings at once. A world of objects that we slowly—often forgetfully, seldom perfectly—groped in darkness [...] is now presented by a light ray to the eye and, thus, to the soul as a huge *co-operation and co-existence* [*ein Mit- und Nebeneinander*] according to eternal laws” (8: 692—<a> and added by the author). In <a> Herder reiterates that sight can replace the sense of touch to see an object gropingly. What is peculiar to vision is, however, according to that, due to the characteristics of light, it can instantaneously visualize the world as “a huge *co-operation and co-existence*” at once. In <a> vision still functions successively, like the sense of touch, whereas in it is marked by simultaneity.

As for hearing, Herder continues as follows: “Being bumped and elastically restoring itself, does not each object give a sound? Is not there a medium that receives and transmits this sound to other harmonious bodies? The sound is nothing other than *a voice of all moved bodies that is uttered from within* and *conveys* their suffering, resistance, and aroused powers to other *harmonious* beings loudly or quietly” (8: 698). While the medium of light conveys to us the surfaces of an object, we are led by the medium of sound to an inner dimension of an object—a new world that is closed to both sight and touch.

Thus Herder concludes that “by means of a *rule that encompasses the whole world*, both media [i.e., light and sound] reveal us *All*, the former visible *All*, the latter audible *All*, respectively—a *world order*” (8: 706)

What does Herder then understand by a world order? Based on the ancient four elements theory, Herder considers each living being in relation to an environment that he designates its “element” or “region.” “Fish,” for example, “seems to us a lively representation of the silver sea itself; the sea reflected and embodied itself in fish, and, if I may say so, it transformed itself into a feeling of fish” (8: 715), because the characteristics of the element of water (or sea) are manifested precisely in fish, particularly in its shape or activities. The same applies to birds and animals (8: 717–718). Each living being inhabits a certain element whose characteristics it embodies. And to live such a life is well-being: “Everywhere I find nature in high consonance with the well-being of the creature and in the original beauty suitable for each region” (8: 717–718).

Every environment is independent: “What Nature has given to you is not given to me. I do

14 Here Herder uses the Greek word *το μεταξυ*, referring to Aristotle’s *De anima* (II.7).

not know anything about your groping sense of touch. [...] Sight and smell make a world for me; I am created to this world,' said a bird of prey with an elephant, a parrot, and a whale. They all spoke from *their* world, from their elements" (8: 715). Thus, each animal speaks in and from its world. Herder adds, however, the following: "But only it, i.e., the human being, spoke in them; in the name of all it conducts this conversation" (8: 716). Herder personifies animals to let them say that each living being lives in its own element, pointing out at the same time the peculiar position of the human being that only it can hear—and consciously recite—the conversation of animals. Such consciousness proves that it is endowed with reason.

Accordingly, the human being does not simply live in its element but does so with consciousness: "All living beings in nature aim for *well-being*, by making nature harmonious with it and vice versa; only the human being can do it with reason and reflection" (8: 776). Reason is the capability of becoming conscious of what the human being naturally does in "all life performances [*Lebensverrichtungen*]" by following the way embedded in nature. To use one's reason is, therefore, to live a life "with consciousness" (8: 753). This means the senses and reason are not opposed. Reason is rather embedded in the base layer of the senses and constitutes an upper layer by becoming conscious of the base layer. As such, aesthetics as a theory of the senses forms the basis of Herder's philosophy as whole.

2. Art and Life

According to Herder, only the human being can "make nature harmonious with it and vice versa [...] with reason and reflection" (8: 776). Herder continues: "The realer purposes the human being accomplishes by means of this harmony between nature and itself, the worthier its art" (8: 776). Thus, Herder understands art as "all life performances" insofar as they are penetrated by "understanding and rule," i.e., the "use of active reason by means of sensory organs" (8: 774). The following section clarifies how Herder defines art in the second and third part of the *Calligone*.

In the second part of the *Calligone*, Herder addresses the relationship between nature and art: "We often oppose *nature* to *art*, while we often ascribe to nature the greatest art. Both are not without reason" (8: 759). Herder explains: Art is often ascribed to nature because nature generates via various means many purposive productions and, in this way, practices a kind of art— "nature's art" [*Naturkunst*] (8: 759–760). The human being was also born of "nature's art." "The most gifted artwork of nature, the human being," however, "ought to be an artist by itself—that is immensely crucial" (8: 761). That is, although nature's art gave birth to the human being as an "artistic creature," the human being ought to exert its natural endowment in order to be an artist. For the human being, what matters are only the results attained by its art. To that extent, nature is opposed to human art.

The relationship between nature (or nature's art) and the human being (or human art) is therefore bidirectional. Nature provided the human being with an organ so that it can exert its natural endowment. In this sense, nature is regarded as a "mother extremely propitious toward the human being" (8: 762). The human being must, however, do everything "*by itself*" (8: 762). When nature throws obstacles in its way, the human being is "opposing its art to nature" (8: 761). In this sense, the human being has to intrude into nature. It does not, however, follow that human art aims at conquering or negating nature. "Formed as harmonious with nature, the human being lives in nature, and must live with nature" (8: 774). Nature as the base layer represents a condition for human art positioned in an upper layer, while human art in turn acts upon nature such that each layer constitutes an inseparable whole.

In Section 43 of the third critique, Kant distinguishes “free or liberal art” as an “occupation that is agreeable in itself” from “handicraft” as an “occupation that is disagreeable (burdensome) in itself and is attractive only because of its effect (e.g., the remuneration)” (Kant 5: 304). Herder disapproves of this distinction, arguing that it is contrary to “nature”; instead, Herder maintains, we must “treat *the footstep of art* [*Kunstgang*] of the human nature according to nature” (Herder 8: 763–764). Thus, in the second part of the *Calligone* Herder reconstructs the development of human art in an extremely peculiar way.

Human art begins with architecture and garden art. “Being brought outside and exposed to the weather and dangers of nature, the human being needed shelter and house” (8: 764). Garden art, closely connected with the house, represents the essence of fine art insofar as it distinguishes “in nature harmony from disharmony,” thus “heightening and assembling the beauty of nature everywhere” (8: 766). The third and the fourth arts, clothes and wars, correspond respectively to woman and man, clothed and naked, *decorum* and *honestum*. The final art is language: “To be together, the human race needed language from an early age. Language, an instrument of the noblest arts of spirit, was not invented without need. In it resides a fine art of the human being” (8: 771).

One notices, first of all, that these five arts are regarded as matrices for further arts e.g., household art results from the third art, clothes, and the art of glorifying fighters—in the form of epics or sculpture—from the fourth art of war (8: 770). Second, the role of women is emphasized not only in the third art, clothes, but also in the fifth art, language: “We learned to speak from our mothers; how fortunate it is! Their sonorous tone and their agreeable talkativeness [...] bring a melody of language into our mind and heart, a rich source of the variously beautiful” (8: 771). Third, we should draw attention to the expression “the fine art of living” [*schöne Kunst des Lebens*] (8: 770). This expression used to characterize the third art of clothes anticipates the main theme of the third part of the *Calligone*, which will be analyzed later.

Except for architecture and garden art, the five aforementioned arts do not belong to the “fine arts” in the terminology of the 18th century. Besides being useful, architecture and garden art do not play central roles in the fine arts, and in fact they are often excluded from the fine arts.¹⁵ It follows that for Herder, who gives the *five arts* as examples of fine arts, the concept of the autonomy of art is alien. This can be also seen in Herder’s theory of taste.

“Clothes, gesture, dwelling, and speech in its election of contents and presentation inexorably reveal the taste and tastelessness of the person concerned to those who examine” (8: 841). The “domain” of taste covers the above-mentioned five arts and even goes beyond them, for taste resides in lifestyle from which the “so-called fine arts” tend to be detached. “It is a sign of the lack of taste to imagine that taste is necessary or possible only in the so-called fine arts, i.e., music, painting, dance, and the novel; we experience pretentious art connoisseurs who fancy themselves to have excellent taste in these arts and yet who have the most tasteless lifestyles [*Lebensführung*], even in their way of presenting themselves as connoisseurs” (8: 847–848).

This view reflects a Rousseauesque criticism of modern Europe: “How often the folks who led an active life under a favorable climate laughed at the artful but clumsy Europeans, taking pride in their sense that they better understood the art of living [*die Kunst zu leben*], and practiced it from their youth more easily and happily than the latter” (8: 845). For Herder, taste is, therefore, evident in the “art of living,” and the fine arts which became independent of other

15 Charles Batteux who introduced the term “beaux-arts” excludes eloquence and architecture from the fine arts. See Batteux, *The Fine Arts Reduced to a Single Principle*, p. 22.

arts lost their root in life as a result.

In the third part of the *Calligone*, Herder once again addresses “fine sciences and arts” [*schöne Wissenschaften und Künste*]. Literally translated from the French words “belles lettres” and “beaux arts,” this expression coined in the mid-18th century is vague in its meaning. In order to avoid such vagueness, Herder advances that “this genre of sciences and arts should become *formative* [*bildend*]*—it should form the human character in us; at this point they all converge, even though they would otherwise not be united in the way of their operations*”(8: 941). Accompanied by the adjective “*bildend*,” the noun “*Kunst*” generally means “plastic art.” Herder, however, changes the meaning of the adjective, understanding the art which forms or builds the human character in us.

The question consequently arises: “What is cultivable and trainable in the human being?” Herder’s answer is that “everything awaits this training, without which the human being was and is not only a raw wood, an unformed marble, but is and becomes a brute” (8: 943). That is, “all limbs,” the “subtle senses,” “our soul-forces,” and “our inclinations” are to be trained.

Here we should notice, first, that Herder emphasizes cultivating the senses: “The subtle senses, vision, hearing, hand, and tongue need training” (8: 944). While the first part of the *Calligone* dealt with the cooperation of the senses of touch and vision in connection with Molyneux’s problem, arguing that the sense of touch serves as a ground for that of vision, in the third part of the *Calligone* Herder revisits the issue in the context of cultivation of the senses to “form eye by hand, and vice versa” (8: 944). As for the relationship between ear and tongue, Herder underscores the need to “accustom the ear to hearing intelligibly, i.e., to hearing not only the tones, but also the thoughts of human speech” and to “accustom the tongue to expressing the latter, as is required by its nature and end” (8: 944). In other words, the ear and the tongue are to be cultivated toward language—the “fifth fine art of the human being” according to the second part of the *Calligone* (8: 771). Herder thus integrates his theory of the senses and art into his theory of cultivation in the third part of the *Calligone*.

Second, Herder’s argument throughout the *Calligone* converges on the “forming art of living” [*die bildende Kunst des Lebens*] (8: 946), an idea starkly opposed to the modern idea of autonomous art.¹⁶ It does not, however, follow that his “art of living” has nothing to do with fine art: “the person who always struggles for ‘removing what should not be in the wood, precisely that way fosters the form of the image,’ as Luther says, is a Pygmalion of the self who follows the idea of the beautiful and the supreme that enlivens him” (8: 946). Here Herder compares the art of living to the art of sculpture, quoting Luther’s words in his very first publication, the *Seven Penitential Psalms in German* (1517),¹⁷ which are also cited in Hamann’s *Socratic Memorabilia* (1759).¹⁸ This metaphor originates from the ninth section of Plotinus’ essay *On the Beautiful*,¹⁹ where a sculptor regards himself as a statue to be formed, hence Herder uses the expression

16 The history of the idea of the art of living still needs to be investigated. As for the art of living in the 18th century, see Schmid, *Philosophie der Lebenskunst: Eine Grundlegung*, pp. 33–37.

17 “[...] gleich wie ein bildmacher, eben yn dem er weg nymet und hawet, was am holtz tzum bilde nit sall, yn dem furdert er auch die form des bildes.” Luther, *Werke*, vol. I, p. 208. Dietrich Irmscher, the editor of the 8th volume of the Frankfurt edition, notes that Luther’s source is “not proven” (8: 1241).

18 Hamann, *Socratic Memorabilia*, p. 384.

19 See: “Recall your thoughts inward, and if while contemplating yourself, you do not perceive yourself beautiful, imitate the statuary [*οἷα ποιητῆς ἀγάλματος*]; who when he desires a beautiful statue cuts away what is superfluous, smooths and polishes what is rough, and never desists until he has given it all the beauty his art is able to effect. In this manner must you proceed, by lopping what is luxuriant, directing what is oblique, and, by purgation, illustrating what is obscure, and thus continue to polish and beautify your statue [*τὸ σὸν ἄγαλμα*] until the divine splendour of Virtue shines upon you, and Temperance seated in pure and holy majesty rises to your view.” Thomas Taylor *The Platonist: Selected Writings*, pp. 157–158.

“Pygmalion of the self.”²⁰ What characterizes the *Calligone* is that this metaphor of a sculptor pertains to the existence of the human being who takes care of itself by forming itself as a kind of living artwork.²¹

3. Artistic Illusion

In the *Calligone*, as we have seen, Herder does not seek to distinguish the fine arts and other arts as two different species. His theory of artistic illusion in the second part of the *Calligone*, however, reveals a characteristic peculiar to the fine arts.

Herder describes artistic illusion (*Täuschung*) as follows: “The word ‘*täuschen*’ [give an illusion] comes from the word ‘*tauschen*’ [exchange]. The poet gives me an illusion when she puts me in her way of thinking, or in her plot and feeling; I exchange [*tauschen*] my way of thinking with her, or let it lie dormant while she acts; I forget myself. [...] I have to forget myself, even my time and space, carried by the wings of the poetry into its dramatic plot, into *its* time and space” (8: 788–789). This exchange is, however, not to be confused with a state of complete self-oblivion, as Herder’s expression “lie dormant” suggests, alluding to the Leibnizian concept of “dormant monad.” No matter how deeply the observer is absorbed in a work of art, she does not confuse fictions with realities. At issue is an exchange of ways of thinking without losing oneself: “by the power of a plot, I must *mentally* be where the poet lets me exist; my imagination, my feeling, serves the poet, but not my person” (8: 789).

Excellent works are endowed with the power to make me forget myself and to take me out of myself: “without pettily returning to myself, I am filled with the idea that elevates me above myself and occupies all my powers” (8: 730). A work of art engages me in feeling and thinking together with the artist and living the unknown world, contributing in this way to the “art of living” on a deep level.

Herder’s view of artistic illusion was relatively new in the 18th century. In Lessing’s *Laocoon* (1766), we find an expression of the view widely shared in the 18th century: “The poet desires to make the ideas which she awakens in us so vivid, that from the rapidity with which they arise we believe we perceive the sensory impressions of the object they refer to; and in this moment of illusion we cease to be conscious of the means—that is, of the words—which she employs for this purpose.”²² By “artistic illusion,” Lessing means that as the recipient is not conscious of the means of a work of art; she gets the impression that the objects to which they refer are immediately present. For Herder, on the other hand, artistic illusion means that the recipient imaginarily assimilates the way of thinking and feeling of the artist, displacing her own way of thinking and feeling into the background.

In conclusion: by investigating the five senses as a basis for aesthetic theory; by understanding the human being to be constituted by an inseparable base layer of nature and upper layer of art; and finally by interpreting the fine arts as an art of living, Herder is uniquely positioned within modern aesthetics.

20 Influenced by the prevalence of the myth of Pygmalion by Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, X, 243–97) in 18th century France and Germany, Herder added to his book *Sculpture* (1778) the subtitle: “Some Observations on Shape and Form from Pygmalion’s Creative Dream” (Herder 4: 243).

21 The analogy between the art of statuary and the art of living dates back to Epictetus (ca. 55–135 A.D.): “For just as wood is the material of the carpenter, and the bronze that of the sculptor, the art of living has each individual’s own life as its material.” Epictetus, *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, p. 36.

22 Lessing, *Laocoon*, pp. 160–61 (slightly modified).

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