

YOUNG HEGELIAN AESTHETICS

By Gabriele Schimmenti

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It. *Estetica giovane-hegeliana*; Fr. *Esthétique jeune hégélienne*; Germ. *Junghegelianische Ästhetik* or *Kunstphilosophie*; Sp. *Estética joven hegeliana*. In its strict form (*junghegelianische Ästhetik*) the term was introduced by F. Sengle (1971) and further discussed (*junghegelianische Kunsttheorie*) in a systematic study by I. Pepperle (1978). The term denotes the main aesthetic features that characterize the cultural and political German movement known as Young (or Left) Hegelians. Since the intellectuals of this *milieu* were consistently different in terms of thought and geographical belonging (Bunzel, Lambrecht 2011), the main features of the movement should be considered in a general way.

CURRENT DEBATES

A rediscovery of Young Hegelian Aesthetics occurred only recently. Among other reasons, the conceptual shift from the concept of *Biedermeier* to the concept of *Vormärz*, which took place in German literature studies, played a crucial role (Eke 2005: 14-19). At the same time, the philological works on the discrepancy between Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, published by the scholar H. G. Hotho (1802-1873) from 1835 onwards, and the manuscripts of Hegel's students, encouraged a reassessment of the studies about Young Hegelian Aesthetics.

The current debates can be analyzed on the basis of two aspects: (A) historical and (B) systematic.

(A) In the last years, it has become possible to challenge the centrality given to Hegel's Aesthetics as the central influence of Young Hegelians Aesthetics, at least reducing its exclusiveness. It has been shown, for example, that A. Ruge (1802-1880) did not know Hegel's Aesthetics entirely when he wrote and published his own *Neue Vorschule der Ästhetik* (1836/37) and that many Hegelians reveal the influence of Hotho's edition, instead of Hegel's own philosophy of art (Oldrini 1994; Lambrecht 2002). Also, the revolutionary poetry of H. Heine (1797-1856) and the literary movement of the Young Germany (*Junges Deutschland*)

were not as influential on the Young Hegelians as previously assumed (Opitz, Pinkert 1994; Eke 2005). Nevertheless, it is difficult to drastically refute the influence played by Hegel's Aesthetics on these intellectuals. Since he was active in Berlin during the end of his career, his influence on the Young Hegelian group in Berlin cannot be doubted. For instance, B. Bauer (1809-1882) took part as a student to the last lecture of aesthetics that Hegel (2017) gave in Berlin in *Wintersemester 1828/29*. The same year, on the occasion of the Royal Prize of the University of Berlin, he wrote a text for an academic competition titled *De pulchri principiis (On the Principles of Beauty)*, that was awarded, among others, by Hegel himself (Moggach 2003). Furthermore, it is likely that also the young K. Marx, before and during his studies in Berlin, was interested in Hegel's Aesthetics (Schimmenti 2016; Heinrich 2018). Traces of Hegel's reflection on art can also be found in other Young Hegelians in Berlin, such as K. F. Köppen (1808-1863). This is also true for those Hegelians that cannot be properly defined as "Young", such as F. Th. Vischer (1807-1887) or J. K. F. Rosenkranz (1805-1879), but that orbit around the *Hallische*, the *Deutsche* and the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, the main periodicals of the movement.

Another relevant trait of the Young Hegelian Aesthetics is the critique of the *Romantik*. In *Der Protestantismus und die Romantik* (1839/40), a Manifesto written by Th. Echtermeyer (1805-1844) and Ruge, the Romantics are criticized for being conservative and for expressing the reaction in Germany in opposition to the principles of the German Reformation and Enlightenment.

Nevertheless, modern aesthetic categories such as the comic, the ugly or the sublime, became gradually more important than beauty due to Hegel's and the Young Hegelians' Aesthetics (Iannelli 2007).

A precise balance of the aesthetic sources and how they interplay in the whole group remains open to discussion.

(B) The development of the aesthetic debates within the Young Hegelians is characterized by two phases. If the first one is marked by the critique of theology and religion, the second is concerned with the social and the political (Calvié 2010). During this period, religion and art are consistently taken to be in an "amphibolic" movement (Müller 2004), since religion begins to be considered grounded on aesthetic properties and art gains a religious capacity. The transition from the first to the second phase was accelerated by the rise to the throne of Friedrich Wilhelm IV, which hindered constitutional claims and introduced a rigid Catholicism in Prussia, expelling republicans and democrats from universities and public life and censoring their writings.

In any case, it was Hegel's philosophy of art that paved the way to Young Hegelian Aesthetics.

The theory of the End of Art was gradually transformed into a theory of the Future of Art. The Young Hegelians do not consider art as being merely something of the past, as was stated by Hegel (Siani 2012). They stress its political role instead. Art gains the "function" of contributing to the "social utopia" (Collenberg-Plotnikov 2011), being now considered an active force within political conflicts and struggles. Ruge, for example, developed an emancipatory theory of the comic. The comic presupposes a sense of independence and autonomy from the object represented, a sort of distance that testifies the power of subjectivity over the existing reality (Moggach 2011). If Ruge focuses on the category of the comic, Bauer

develops the idea of the “dissolution of religion in art” (*Auflösung der Religion in der Kunst*), hence reconfiguring Hegel’s Absolute Spirit. He accepts the idea of the End of the Art in a specific sense. He considers the autonomy of art, claimed by Hegel, as not really achieved in modernity, invoking its secularization. Nevertheless, this invocation is not merely limited to religious aspects, but contains an essential political core. The politicization of art consists in the possibility of art becoming autonomous and freeing itself from any heteronomous forces, religion and politics included (Breckmann 2006; Schimmenti 2018). For this reason, the end of art and the future of art are categories deeply implied for Bauer, so that, when (heteronomous) art ends, (autonomous) art begins, an element correctly recognized by M. Stirner (1806-1856) in his article *Kunst und Religion* in the “*Rheinische Zeitung*” (1842).

L. Feuerbach (1804-1872) also took part in this Young Hegelian debate. He considered art a fundamental part of his “philosophy of the future”, since it expresses the truth of human sensuousness. The strong link between art and sensuousness in a Feurbachean background was later specified by H. Hettner’s (1821-1882) article *Gegen die speculative Ästhetik* (1845).

Therefore, Lukács’ (1953) general indication, that Young Hegelians Aesthetics represents a sublimation of social conflict in capitalism through the adoption of aesthetic categories, such as the “comic” or the “ugly”, seems to restrict the proper spectrum of the movement, not considering the real political range.

ITALIAN DEBATES

In Italy, the research into Young Hegelian Aesthetics has found a prosperous, even if restricted, terrain. Ravera (1978) gave an important contribution to this topic, even if he considered all the “Post-Hegelian Aesthetics”, including also the philosophy of art of speculative theism or other relevant figures.

Oldrini (1994), recognizing the polarity between the “End” and the “Future of Art”, considered the Young Hegelian Aesthetics as characterized by an “anti-panlogistic” soul, which allowed a gradual abandonment of Hegel’s Aesthetics and the rise of other aesthetics categories such as the ugly or the comic. A focus on Bauer’s aesthetics in Italy, after Cesa’s (1972) precursory studies, was given by Tomba (2002) who discussed the aesthetic form of Bauer’s critique of the Gospels.

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