

## Aesthetic Experience, *Mimesis* and Testimony

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### Abstract

In this article, I relate the demand that Paul Ricœur suggests *mimesis* places on the way we think about truth to the idea that the work of art is a model for thinking about testimony. By attributing a work's epoché of reality to the work of imagination, I resolve the impasse that arises from attributing music, literature, and art's distance from the real to their social emancipation. Examining the conjunction, in aesthetic experience, of the communicability and the exemplarity of a work reveals how Ricœur's definition of *mimesis* as refiguration relates to the "rule" that the work summons. This "rule" constitutes the solution to a problem or question for which the work is the answer. In conclusion, as a model for thinking about testimony, the claims that works make have a counterpart in the injunctions that issue from exemplary moral and political acts.

**Keywords:** *Aesthetic experience, Mimesis, Judgment, Testimony*

### Résumé

Dans cet article, j'établis un lien entre l'exigence que, selon Paul Ricœur, la mimésis place dans notre façon de penser la vérité, et l'idée que l'œuvre d'art est un modèle pour penser le témoignage. Appliquant l'époché de la réalité à l'œuvre d'imagination, j'évite l'impasse qui se dresse lorsqu'on attribue la musique, la littérature et la distance artistique du réel à leur émancipation sociale. L'étude de la conjonction du caractère communicable et exemplaire d'une œuvre – dans l'expérience esthétique – met en lumière la relation que la définition par Ricœur de la mimésis comme refiguration établit avec la "règle" que l'œuvre convoque. Cette règle est la solution au problème auquel l'œuvre apporte une réponse. Finalement, un modèle pour penser le témoignage peut être trouvé dans des œuvres qui trouvent leur contrepartie dans les injonctions produites par les actions morales et politiques exemplaires.

**Mots-clés :** *Expérience esthétique, Mimesis, Jugement, Témoignage*

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# Aesthetic Experience, *Mimesis* and Testimony

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Music, literature, and art's power to open our horizons places a new demand on the way that we think about truth. Critics and cultural theorists have long maintained that musical works, literary texts, works of art, dance performances, and the like are more than just ideologically complicit in maintaining the status quo. By insisting that works can contest and subvert the existing order of reality, literary critics, cultural musicologists, and critical theorists have presumed that these cultural phenomena can also break open congealed systems of thought and fields of experience. Music, literature, and art more than just reflect or reproduce already constructed representations of reality. By inventing new ways of thinking, seeing, feeling, and acting, individual works renew the practical field in accordance with the different worlds that each expresses through placing reality into suspense.

The difficulty—and even the impossibility—of deriving a cultural work's creative or productive potential from the aesthetic's relegation to a separate social sphere is indicative of the challenge posed by the presumption of music and art's critical bite. Despite efforts to rehabilitate the aesthetic, retrieving music and art's subversive, productive potential from the aesthetic's ideologically deleterious function has proven to be a daunting task. The paradox—that the aesthetic's isolation should also be the condition of art and music's critical vehemence—is more than just ironic; it also dooms the attempt to derive music's critical vehemence from the fact of its social emancipation. It is difficult to see how, as weapons in the fight for social position and power, literature and art could also be the wellspring of the world's practical transformation. And yet, apart from the world's redescription in the light of the alternatives that works proffer, music, literature, and art's presumed efficacy is merely a conceptual chimera.

Music poses some special challenges in this respect. Absolute music—instrumental music that has no programmatic associations—is devoid of any obvious referents. Historically, musical hermeneutics has provided a way of redressing this apparent deficiency with respect to music's representation of its content. This recourse to a method for ascribing meaning to a work, however, conceals the more fundamental question: How does a musical work communicate a meaning that is specific to it? The power to communicate an experience that only *this* work occasions is decisive. The work's communicability thus provides an initial touchstone for inquiring into the relation between aesthetic experience and the demand that the capacity for discovering new allusions to reality places on the way we think about truth.

This capacity for inventing new ways of experiencing the world lies at the heart of the question of the work's truth. The challenge that this question poses becomes even more pronounced when we consider the individual character of the experience communicated by a work. Whether it is a piece of music, a literary text, a painting, a sculpture, a theatrical production, or a dance performance, every encounter is singularly unique. Every encounter involves an individual listener, reader, or spectator, a particular work, and distinctive circumstances. One of the major difficulties for criticism springs from this irreplaceable relation

between the work and the listener, reader, or spectator; this relation is also the condition for every meaningful engagement with the world that the work expresses. Moreover, the experience occasioned by a work is in principle open to all. The question of the work's truth thus gives rise to a formidable paradox. My wager is that, through following this paradox to its end, the prospective dimension of the claim that a work makes through aesthetically prefiguring new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting will overtake the classical conception of truth.

The distance that aesthetic experience introduces into the heart of reality is crucial in this respect. The defamiliarization and displacement of the everyday world is in this sense the condition for reality's imaginative redescription and refiguration. This distance, which originates with the work's suspension of the practical order, is bound up with the work's figurative power. Theodor W. Adorno's attempt to attribute this distance to art and music's social emancipation has the advantage of highlighting what for him was art's first social characteristic. And yet, as I will argue, the force of the claim that a work makes is more immediately bound up with its exemplary character. Through joining Paul Ricœur's suggestion that *mimesis* is ahead of our ordinary concept of truth to his question as to whether the work of art might serve as a model for thinking about testimony, I intend to draw out the connection between a work's exemplarity and music's communicability of feelings and moods that redescribe our inherence in the world. In the process, I hope also to show how judgment and imagination figure in the work's expression of a meaning whose prospective dimension augments the practical field of our everyday experiences.

## Critical Distance

The status of the distance that separates a musical work, a literary text, or a work of art from the practical field provides an initial indication of the nature of a work's claim to truth. During the nineteenth century, for example, music—and especially absolute music—was regarded as an intimation of the infinite. Once vested with metaphysical dignity, purely instrumental music was considered to be a “language beyond language.” This conceit of ineffability, however, eventually came under attack. Postmodern musicologists deconstructed the nineteenth-century hubris of music's metaphysical transcendence and replaced it with contextualized readings of gendered identities, sexual politics, and hegemonic political agendas. In a dramatic reversal, the distance accorded music was wrested from its chimerical autonomy and was denounced as the ideological construct of a bourgeois aesthetic culture.

Adorno, however, was not so quick to dismiss the significance of music and art's claim to autonomy. For him, the distance instituted through music and art's attainment of their own autonomous standpoints was essential to their critical social function. In his debate with Walter Benjamin over politically committed art, Adorno insisted on privileging art's aesthetic autonomy over its service to a political agenda. Committed art, Adorno maintained, “is not intended to generate ameliorative measures, legislative acts or practical institutions.”<sup>1</sup> Rather its proper function consists in resisting the course of the world. Art or music accomplishes this through its internal construction, that is, “by its form alone.”<sup>2</sup> The committed work of art thus satisfies its ideal only by renouncing tendentious political allegiances. For Adorno, this ideal was evinced by the polemical alienation that Brecht invented as a theorist, and which “as an artist [he] practised less and less as he committed himself more firmly to the role of a friend of mankind.”<sup>3</sup> However politically radical the message might be, its advocacy through a work of art turns the work into a

weapon in the political arsenal of the party, the nation, or the idea in whose service it is placed at the expense of its true critical *raison d'être*.

Adorno's conviction that art's aesthetic autonomy is the requisite condition of its critical social truth highlights the aporia in question. On the one hand, art for art's sake—the hallmark of art's claim to autonomy—"denies by its absolute claims that ineradicable connection with reality which is the polemical *a priori* of the very attempt to make art autonomous from the real."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, committed art, which is "necessarily detached as art from reality, cancels the distance between the two."<sup>5</sup> Only through constituting itself "in relation to what it is not,"<sup>6</sup> Adorno tells us, can art resist its assimilation to the existing order of things. Hence the negative dialectical turn: as a social fact, art is at the same time non-identical with the social totality by reason of the distancing relation won through its aesthetic autonomy.

Adorno's aesthetic theory trades on this aporia. He, along with other Frankfurt School critical theorists, was justifiably suspicious of the deleterious role that music, literature, and theatre played in modern social life. Adorno went so far as to denounce any positive relation between works of art and empirical reality as a betrayal of art's critical social intent. For him, art's distance from reality was its first social characteristic.<sup>7</sup> As the "social antithesis of society,"<sup>8</sup> works of art consequently acquired their real value and force only in their determinate opposition to ideologically routinized practices.

We might wonder, however, whether through pointing "to a practice from which they abstain: the creation of a just life,"<sup>9</sup> works of music, literature, and art break free of the epistemic order to which they are determinately opposed. For Adorno, Arnold Schoenberg's music, for example, modeled the only philosophy that could be practiced responsibly in the face of despair. Through contemplating "all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption"<sup>10</sup> so to speak, Schoenberg's music revealed contradictions and antagonisms otherwise concealed by instrumental reason's encroachment on all spheres of life. And yet for this music as for art, "utopia—the yet-to-exist—is draped in black."<sup>11</sup> Hence their melancholic condition: set against the existing order to which they are opposed, works become a refuge for a truth that loses itself in its unremitting suspicion.

This hibernatory refuge, which holds out scarcely any hope for the world's reclamation, is also the vanishing point of music and art's claim to truth. From this standpoint, the "question of the reality or unreality of redemption itself hardly matters."<sup>12</sup> Remonstrating against ideologically calcified systems of domination holds open the possibility of a utopian alternative. At the same time, the promised condition of freedom—which Adorno, like Max Horkheimer, extracted from the program of the Enlightenment—constantly removes itself to an infinite distance.

This paradox—that art's constitution in opposition to real social conditions is perhaps the sole remaining refuge for truth—dominates Adorno's aesthetic theory. The impossibility of deriving the aesthetic's creative potential from the fact of art's social emancipation fuels the performative contradiction that, according to Jürgen Habermas, inheres in a totalizing critique. This contradiction—which dominates a critique for which the "suspicion of ideology becomes *total*"<sup>13</sup>—insinuates itself in art's melancholic condition. Confined to the imaginary reparation of the catastrophes that pile up in the wake of the Enlightenment's dialectical reversal, the projection in art of a semblance of freedom therefore comes "at the price of [any] real reconciliation."<sup>14</sup> The spell cast by reason's transformation into the instrument of the subject's

domination consigns music and art to this melancholic condition. With what force, we might therefore wonder, could a work of art, a literary work, or a musical composition recall a condition of freedom that, under this spell, has not yet and might not ever come to pass?

The seeming advantage of attributing art's first social characteristic to its distance from empirical reality thus also proves to be a major stumbling block. Attributing music and art's critical truth content to the fact of their social emancipation identifies music and art's aesthetic autonomy as a node of resistance. At the same time, the enigmatic promise—that art's truth, which cannot be deduced from the existing order of reality, holds out the hope of the world's transformation—is also the vanishing point of the work's critical force. So long as art's truth remains bound to the historical moment when music and art attained their own autonomous standpoint, the illusion—the semblance—in music and art of an order beyond the world's instrumental functioning remains dependent upon this socially instituted aesthetic sphere. For Adorno, authentic works militate against the false consciousness of congealed social contradictions, the untruth of which they expose. Through recalling the anticipated condition of utopian freedom without betraying it to existence, art's refractory objectification of the truth of real social conditions operates within the domain of a critical project haunted by its own relentless negativity.

Art and music's promise of an end to antagonisms consequently lays bare the contradiction that stems from deriving art's critical impulse from its attainment of its own autonomous standpoint. On the one hand, music and art's aesthetic autonomy instantiates the distance that, for Adorno, was the requisite condition of their critical social function and truth. On the other hand, this distance is also the condition for disassembling music and art's ideological complicity. Hence the dilemma: how can the aesthetic's institution as a separate sphere also serve as the condition for art and music's critical force?

The difficulty, and even the impossibility, of wresting a productive value from the aesthetic's ideological constitution brings this dilemma to the fore. Rather than simply denounce the aesthetic, George Levine and Terry Eagleton, for example, have argued for its rehabilitation.<sup>15</sup> The enigma, however, cannot be resolved at the level at which it is posed. By placing art's distance from reality at the center of his theory of music and art's critical social function, Adorno underscores the connection between art and music's efficacy and their distancing relation to the real. And yet, attributing this distance to the fact of art's social emancipation leads inexorably to the performative contradiction exemplified by the refuge that truth takes in music and art's retreat into their own aesthetically autonomous spheres.

The impasse engendered by this strategy is inescapable. Squaring art's social institution as an autonomous entity—which renders it ideological—with the idea that its autonomy also institutes the distancing relation necessary to its emancipatory potential proves to be something of a Sisyphean task.<sup>16</sup> By insisting that truth is something that is not made, Adorno intends to set music and art's critical impulse against the heteronomous law that subordinates all aspects of life to instrumental reason's calculative purposes. By recalling "precisely what does not exist for-another,"<sup>17</sup> the work remonstrates against this law through the artifice of its own internal rule. And yet from this vantage-point, so long as "what is true in art is something nonexistent,"<sup>18</sup> the truth to which the work lays claim remains bound to the schema of music, literature, and art's aesthetic autonomy. So long as their utopian thrust consists "essentially in the determined negation . . . of that which merely is,"<sup>19</sup> music, literature, and art's determined opposition to the existing empirical order draws its force from the arts' social emancipation. But then their critical force is

still a function of the distance instituted by their aesthetic autonomy, to which their truth also continues to be held hostage.

## Aesthetic Experience

The presumption of a work's capacity to stand over against the practical field of everyday experiences is indispensable to the idea that music, literature, theatre, dance, and art can not only resist the course of things, but that they can also propose imaginative alternatives that in turn can affect the ways in which we inhabit the world. George Levine's plea for a view of the aesthetic that would acknowledge its liberatory potential stresses the need to rehabilitate the practice of only denouncing works for their deleterious meanings and functions.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, attributing music, literature, and art's critical force to the aesthetic's institution as a separate social sphere confounds the effort of extracting a creative, productive impetus from this otherwise ideologically duplicitous condition.

Broaching the question of literature, art or music's truth in this way has the advantage of drawing out the nature of the connection between a work's distancing relation to the real and its productive character. By setting the work's social truth against the existing empirical order, Adorno succeeded in highlighting the work's distance from social reality as the condition of its critical force. By the same token, taking the work's aesthetic autonomy as the origin of this distance leads inexorably to that hibernatory refuge that is concomitant with music and art's melancholic condition. Adorno's aesthetic theory evinces the dependence of music and art's claim to truth on this distancing relation. Nothing, however, commits us to the idea that this distance (which is arguably the condition for music and art's critical force) originates with the work's aesthetic autonomy in the social environs of the cult of the bourgeois religion of art.

That art and music's truth depends upon their relation to the existing order from which—in a sense that remains to be developed—they take their distance bears on the nature of the claim that art or music could be said to make. Everything rests on the way that this relation is understood. When, for example, the opposition between an aesthetically autonomous work and material reality is reversed, the truth of the work is made to consist of its embodiment of socially constructed representations of gendered identities, sexual politics, and exoticizing displays. Adorno's critical practice surpasses deconstructive strategies in this respect. For him, music and art's difference from the empirical order gives rise to refractory objectifications that, through remonstrating against the existing order, reveal the lack, in reality, of an end to antagonisms.

We might wonder whether a mode of truth that invariably assumes this negative dialectical cast ever exceeds the work's determinate negation of reality. At the same time, a fascination with deconstructing music's claim to aesthetic autonomy blinds some to their reliance upon a concept of representation whose illusory character they vehemently denounce. One of the main attractions of narrativizing interpretations is that they provide a means for ascribing a meaningful content to an otherwise seemingly ineffable musical experience. Janet Wolff underscores the critical interest that cultural theorists and critical musicologists have in interpretative strategies that provide a method for deciphering ostensibly socially constructed representations of gender and sexuality. Since "a cultural form with narrative content can be more easily related to political ideas than one . . . like music,"<sup>21</sup> identifying music's structural features with a narrative program provides a method for deciphering hidden political referents. Discovering such referents within music's internal relations has the appearance of overcoming

music's apparent lack of extra-musical meaning. Ironically, here the classical concept of truth as adequation also dominates the tactical position taken. Anthropomorphizing interpretations of the actions and motives of (quasi-) characters who populate these "musical" stories, and narrativizing explanations of hegemonic political agendas thus replace defenses of music's purely aesthetic value.<sup>22</sup>

The paradox that springs from reversing the terms of the opposition that sets music's claim to autonomy against social and political agendas brings to the fore the inner connection between differing views of music's relation to the real and conceptions of its truth. For Ricœur, the distance that a work introduces into the heart of reality is attributable to the productive imagination. Correlatively, his theory of *mimesis* has the advantage of exploding the classical concept of truth. In contrast to this concept of truth—where the adequation of concept and thing defines the truth of the representation—Ricœur's theory ties the claim that a work makes to its ontological vehemence. Imagination, which is productive only when "thought is at work,"<sup>23</sup> is operative in the distance that a work takes from the real. This distance—which each work achieves through placing the real into suspense—is at the same time the condition for the work's redescription of ways of inhering in the world. Consequently, the epoché that the work introduces into the heart of reality is also the condition of the work's critical bite.

Music is especially instructive in this respect. Music, it has often been said, is a non-representational art. Its expressive power thus appears to lie outside the bounds of all verbal or conceptual representation. At the same time, the experiences that tunes, songs, and musical works afford are decidedly meaningful; they bring to the fore the fact that music's power of expression is rooted in the communicability of affective qualities that individual works possess.<sup>24</sup> The risk of succumbing to the allure of music's ineffability is therefore not as great as it at first might seem. Postmodern musicologists have been indefatigable in their criticism of the metaphysical conceit of music's transcendence of the world. And yet, tearing away the mask of a "language beyond language" through reverting to socially constructed representations only avoids the challenge of accounting for the communicability of an experience that resists its conceptual recuperation. The communicability of an experience that is singularly unique provides a privileged point of access to the challenge posed by my assertion that the way we think about music, literature, or art's truth depends upon how we understand its relation to the real. The question of music's distance from the real, which I took up above, provides a critical touchstone in this respect.

As I just mentioned, Ricœur's theory of *mimesis* provides a crucial advantage in attributing this distancing relation to the work's power to project a world that refigures the practical field of everyday experiences through placing it in suspense. Here the work's retreat from the real is only the negative condition for reality's redescription in the light of a heuristic fiction. As an operative mode of the productive imagination, imitation, Ricœur points out, "is no longer a reduplication of reality but a creative rendering of it."<sup>25</sup> Imagination is therefore at work in a work through producing itself as a world.

That the work of imagination manifests itself in the world projected by the work sets thought about truth on a new path. (I will follow this path below, when I take up Ricœur's suggestion that *mimesis* is ahead even of Heidegger's concept of truth as manifestation.) At the same time, the power of imagination operative in this mimetic activity presupposes the work's communicability. Hence, before proceeding to a consideration of what this power demands of the way we think about truth, I want first to draw out how the claim that a work makes upon us vis-

à-vis the world depends upon the communicability of an experience that fully merits being called aesthetic.

Some of the most stubborn difficulties for any reflection on music, literature, or art's meaning spring from the fact that this experience "involves each time a reader, a spectator, or a listener."<sup>26</sup> The singularity of the experience occasioned by a work thus immediately appears to militate against any general rule. The meaning of the experience resists its subsumption under a prescriptive, universal norm. In view of the unique nexus of an individual work, listener, and circumstance, it is tempting to suggest that aesthetic experiences are merely subjective. But how then could music—traditional, popular, or modern—for example, serve as a symbol of a group or a national identity? That the experiences afforded by music contribute in some way to the formation of a common bond overturn the solipsistic consequences of the radical subjectivization of aesthetic experience. Hence the central paradox: how is an experience that is unique to each listener communicable in such a way that it can, in principle, be shared among all?

This paradox underscores the role of judgment in aesthetic experience. The Irish tale *The Gifts of the Little People* is illuminating in this regard. In this tale, two hunchbacks encounter the fairy folk. The first overhears the fairies singing and dancing while walking past a fairy fort one night. After listening to the fairies' song, which was the nicest he had ever heard, he took up the fairies' refrain *Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Luain, Dé Máirt*, [Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday, Monday, Tuesday], and added the words *Is Dé Céadaoin!* [And Wednesday!] to enhance the tune.<sup>27</sup> Delighted by this addition, the fairies reward the first hunchback by removing his hump. Upon discovering the secret of the first hunchback's good fortune, the second hunchback tried his luck. A year later on the next Samhain Eve, he set off for the fort without delay. The second hunchback, "who was in a great hurry to get rid of his hump, never thought of waiting until the fairies had done, or watching for a fit opportunity to raise the tune higher."<sup>28</sup> Believing that if adding one day was good, adding two would be even better, the second hunchback takes up the refrain *Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Luain, Dé Máirt, Dé Céadaoin* and adds *Agus Diaradoin!* [and Thursday!]. Outraged by this affront, the offended fairies rewarded the second hunchback by adding the first hunchback's hump to the one he already had.

How in this tale, we could ask, did the fairies discriminate between the two hunchbacks' additions to their song? In the absence of any rule that would determine the merits of the added refrains, the fairies could only determine the suitability of these added refrains in their singular instances. The judgment that the first hunchback's words *Is Dé Céadaoin* raised the tune higher rests on a grasp of the fit of the tune. The first hunchback's genius has its complement in the fairies' exercise of a power and a capacity that Kant attributes to judgments of taste. For, through apprehending the suitability of the first hunchback's refrain, the fairies' grasp of the song's heightened expressive character attests to the communicability of the new fit of the song.

This capacity for grasping the fit of a tune, song, or work is the hallmark of aesthetic judgment. Ricœur explains that, by differentiating between aesthetic judgment and determinative judgment, Kant allowed for a "split within the idea of subsumption."<sup>29</sup> In aesthetic judgment, the act by which a case is placed under a rule is reversed. For a "given case, one 'seeks' the appropriate rule under which to place the singular experience."<sup>30</sup> This judgment, Ricœur explains, is "'merely' reflective because the transcendental subject does not determine any universally valid objectivity, but instead only takes into account the procedure the mind follows in the operation of subsumption, proceeding in a way from below to above."<sup>31</sup> In judgments of

taste, the singular case summons its “rule” by schematizing it. Summoning the “rule” is therefore indistinguishable from creating it. Accordingly, a tune’s communicability rests on the air of rightness emanating from it. In the tale *The Gifts of the Little People*, this air of rightness stems from the singular fit produced by the first hunchback’s refrain, which stands apart from the second’s disfigurement of the fairies’ song. This disfigurement, which is visited literally on the unfortunate hunchback in the punishment he receives, conversely evinces the abortive attempt to wrench such a fit through calculative means.

The Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of one of the archaic usages of the word “fit” as a “piece of music; a strain” is instructive in this regard. According to the OED, in this context a strain is a “musical sequence of sounds; a melody, a tune.” The connection between the ordered sequence of sounds and the fit—the character—of a song becomes more explicit if we allow ourselves to be instructed by the ancient art of rhetoric. For this art, *dispositio* was specifically directed toward the arrangement of the parts. The rhetorician’s intention to move her listeners depends upon the affective power that springs from the composition of her speech.<sup>32</sup> Inclining listeners toward the rhetorician’s viewpoint is not different from disposing them to think, feel, and act in accordance with this point of view.

Music’s and poetry’s expression of the feelings or moods that they possess also springs from the internal ordering of their constitutive elements. The elevation of feeling to fiction, which Ricœur emphasizes is the condition of feelings’ mimetic deployment, coincides with this retreat to the interior ordering of a musical or poetic world. Poetic language, Ricœur stresses, is “not directed outwards, but inwards to an interior, which is nothing other than the mood structured and expressed by a poem.”<sup>33</sup> Here, he says, “a poem is like a musical work in that its mood is exactly coextensive with the internal order of symbols articulated by its language.”<sup>34</sup> This eclipse of the real by the world structured by a poem or a musical work acquires its true force in the return to the practical field. Through giving voice to moods and feelings that individual works alone possess, poetry and music open us to the world anew.

Each work has its “rule.” Through displaying the feelings and moods that only it possesses, each tune, song, or musical work expresses its own “thought” or “idea” (*dianoia*). This “idea” constitutes the “rule” to which the work’s configuration as a whole gives voice. Through accompanying and completing the work of imagination, feelings articulated by the work’s distinctive internal make-up make the “thought” (*dianoia*) expressed by an individual work our own. Feeling, Ricœur argues, fulfills its general function through interiorizing the reality that we objectify over against ourselves through uniting an “intention toward the world and an affection of the self.” Accordingly, feeling does “not posit any ‘being’.”<sup>35</sup> Rather, feelings reveal the way in which we are affected through “manifesting a relation to the world that constantly restores our complicity with it.”<sup>36</sup> “To feel,” Ricœur explains, “is to make *ours* what has been put at a distance by thought in its objectifying phase.”<sup>37</sup> Consequently, this self-assimilation through feeling is a part of the commitment proper to the work’s illocutionary force.

The worlding power of individual works not only opens the distance separating the mimetic displacement of poetic feelings from the affective field of everyday experiences; the work’s affective tonalities are also the singular instantiation of feelings and moods emanating from the world expressed by a work. The “rule” summoned by the work is the response that a work provides to the crisis, question, or problem for which it constitutes the answer. There is in the end no *creatio ex nihilo*. Rather, the enigma of artistic creation lies in the fact that what, in the artist’s experience, is incommunicable, “can be transposed in the form of a singular problem to be

resolved.”<sup>38</sup> For Ricœur, genius resides in this “capacity to respond in a singular manner to the singular nature of the question.”<sup>39</sup> By taking the form of a poetic solution, the work makes something of this experience communicable:

Something of her [the artist’s] experience, precisely because it has been carried by a work, is going to be able to be communicated. Her naked experience as such was incommunicable; but, as soon as it can be problematized in the form of a singular question which is adequately answered in the form of a response that is singular as well, then it acquires communicability. The work iconically augments the lived experience, inexpressible, incommunicable, closed upon itself. It is this iconic augmentation, as augmentation, that is communicable.<sup>40</sup>

Far from reproducing the artist’s, the composer’s, or the author’s interior life, the experience communicated by a work breaks open affective and cognitive dimensions of the field of praxis. The adequation between the “singularity of the solution . . . and the singularity of the crisis situation”<sup>41</sup> rests on the judgment that discerns the fit between them. Following G. Granger, Ricœur argues that this adequation merits the term style. The adequacy of the work vis-à-vis the question or problem for which it alone is the answer overruns the classical conception of truth. For where it is a matter of the fittingness of the work, the truth of the work lies with its power to refigure the practical field of our experiences. The “rule” that the work summons is communicable by means of the grasp of this fittingness. The work, we could therefore say, communicates this “rule” by exemplifying it.

## Exemplarity

That a work expresses a meaning only it possesses highlights the singular relation that gives rise to the paradox of aesthetic experience. This paradox, I suggested earlier, springs from the unique relation between each listener, reader, or spectator and an individual work that at the same time is in principle open to everyone. Consequently, the universality of the claim that a work makes rests on the singular nature of the experience through which the work communicates its meaning. By grasping the fit of the work, each listener, reader, or spectator apprehends the “rule” that the work summons. And yet we could ask: How does this “rule” have any validity with respect to its claim to universality when the judgment through which it exercises its force is merely reflective?

Entering the paradox in this way overtakes the impasse that we encountered in Adorno’s effort to rescue art’s truth. This impasse, to recall, stems from Adorno’s attempt to preserve art and music’s critical social function in the face of instrumental reason’s increasing encroachment on all spheres of life. Art’s melancholic condition, I suggested, is consequently also the vanishing point of music and art’s transformative power: for, short of a real end to antagonisms, music and art are only a refuge for a critical mode of social truth that holds out scarcely any hope of the world’s reclamation.

In my view, the real power that works have with respect to the practical field is concentrated in the work’s exemplification of the “thought” (*dianoia*), feelings, and moods that it possesses. I argued previously that works augment the practical field through summoning the “rule” that each work expresses. Moreover, each work expresses this “rule” only by exemplifying

it. Ricœur's analysis of Nelson Goodman's treatment of exemplification is illuminating in this regard. By treating exemplification as the obverse of denotation, Goodman reverses the direction of denotation so that the referent becomes a property that an object possesses. (For example, the label "green" might denote the color of a swatch. However, the swatch exemplifies the label by expressing "greenness.") This reversal of direction makes exemplification a mode of expression. The symmetry of exemplification and denotation by inversion not only surmounts the "ruinous distinction of the cognitive and emotive . . . from which that of denotation and connotation is derived"<sup>42</sup>; this change in direction also accentuates the retreat from the real that is the condition of a work's power to refigure the practical field of our experiences. The distance that the work takes from this field is therefore a function of the exemplification of the world that the work alone expresses.

As the inverse of denotation, the exemplification of the meaning, properties, or characteristics that a work possesses brings about a change in the work's referential status. Ricœur draws this conclusion: both "exemplifying and denoting are cases of making reference, with only a difference of direction."<sup>43</sup> Ricœur moreover argues that this symmetry by inversion does not account for the way that a work's representation of a fictive alternative helps to refashion the world. Expressing properties by exemplifying them alters the direction of the referential operation, so that these properties themselves become the intended referent. At the same time, the metaphorical transfer of the properties that a work possesses—as when, in the example Ricœur gives, a grey picture is said to express sadness—suspends the flow of ordinary references. Expressing a thought, idea, mood, or feeling by exemplifying it cannot therefore be restricted to the existing field of representations. On the contrary, the "epoché of descriptive reference"<sup>44</sup> proper to the strategy of poetic discourse, which accompanies this change in direction, highlights the retreat from the real that, as I just stressed, is also the condition for reality's redescription in the light of a heuristic fiction.

Tying exemplification to the redescription of reality in this way highlights the connection between the "rule" that the work summons and the power of thought and imagination at work. Not only does this "rule" evince the fit of the work, as I said above; this "rule," to which the work singularly attests, is also communicable only through the play of the work's constitutive elements. In the end, only this play is communicable. Hence Ricœur explains that, in Kantian terms, only through its incarnation in a work is the play between imagination and understanding communicable through a singular relation that is in principle available to everyone.<sup>45</sup> This play between imagination and understanding, which is incarnated in an individual work, manifests the fit that the listener, reader, or spectator grasps in apprehending the work. The fit of the work therefore marks the conjuncture between its expression-exemplification of the "rule" that it summons and its augmentation of the listener, reader, or spectator's world.

In the passage cited above, in which Ricœur remarks on how the work iconically augments the artist's lived experience, he stresses that only this iconic augmentation—"as augmentation"—is communicable. The artist's audacity in discovering or inventing the solution to the problem or question for which the work constitutes the answer finds fulfillment in the listener, reader, or spectator's adventure. The connection between the listener, reader, or spectator's grasp of the fit of the work and the composer, author, or artist's "fitting production" far from justifies the fallacy of seeking the meaning of a work in its creator's intention. Rather, the singular feeling of the work's unique suitability accompanies the listener's apprehension of the "idea" that the work as a whole expresses. The air of rightness emanating from the work bears

out the communicability of an experience that augments the listener's affective field and that the work itself exemplifies. Through instantiating its "rule," the play initiated and structured by the work thus also sets the imagination to work.

The importance that Ricœur places on "Kant's concept of productive imagination as schematizing a synthetic operation"<sup>46</sup> underscores reflective judgment's operative role. In the same way that the plot of a story "functions as the narrative matrix,"<sup>47</sup> the icon in the case of metaphor is the "schematization of metaphorical attribution."<sup>48</sup> In short, the icon is the matrix of the new predicative pertinence that resolves the initial semantic clash by producing the image depicted through this predicative assimilation. The "enigma of iconic presentation,"<sup>49</sup> Ricœur explains, lies in the way that the predicative assimilation is depicted within the metaphorical operation. Each time, the meaning intended can be grasped only by drawing it from the ruins of the initial semantic impertinence. The matrix of metaphorical attribution displays the intended image only in the thickness of the imagining scene. Hence the enigma is resolved "each time the new intended meaning is grasped as what the icon describes or depicts."<sup>50</sup>

Does the work's exemplarity open a new path for thinking about truth? Just as the matrix of the new semantic pertinence resolves the enigma of iconic presentation, the work's exemplification of its singular character augments the field of our experiences. Hans-Georg Gadamer once remarked that imagination is most richly productive in a "field of play where the understanding's desire for unity does not so much confine it as suggest incitements to play."<sup>51</sup> Through summoning the "rule" to which it alone attests, the work renews the real in accordance with the world that it unfolds. Hence for Ricœur, if "one can speak of truth in relation to the work of art, it is to the extent that this designates the capacity of the work of art to break a path in the real"<sup>52</sup> by refiguring it.

Why, Ricœur then asks, "should we not say that the univocity of truth is . . . exploded by *mimesis*—to the point that it indicates this fitness, this appropriateness"<sup>53</sup> exuded by the fittingness of certain works and instances of language? It is, he ventures, because the concept of truth as adequation—the "accomplice of the representative illusion"<sup>54</sup>—blocks the way. It is not even certain, Ricœur writes, that "Heidegger's substitution of truth as manifestation for truth as adequation responds to what *mimesis* demands of our thinking about truth."<sup>55</sup> For the truth that a work reveals is one that it not only discovers but also invents.

Attributing the truth of the work to its power for discovering dimensions of experience that have no prior referents in reality ultimately underscores the difference between the work's exemplarity and the classical conception of truth. For, where the truth of the work concerns the capacity for refiguring reality in the light of the worlds that individual works unfold, the power that works have to refashion our expectations runs ahead of the principle of adequation that governs this classical conception.<sup>56</sup> The work's exemplarity therefore stands as the solution to the paradox of aesthetic experience's singularity and universality, which Ricœur maintains must be followed to its end.<sup>57</sup> This universality springs from the way that the experience communicated by a work is in principle open to everyone. Correlatively, the communicability of this singular experience vests the work's exemplarity—which is the ground of its truth—with its prospective dimension. A work's power to shatter the world of our everyday experiences and to remake it from within is therefore not only concentrated in the work's exemplification of different ways of thinking, feeling, and acting; the fit of the work also makes a claim upon us in demanding a response. This claim lies at the heart of the truth of the work. The claim that a work makes opens us to the world anew. Hence this claim is also a wager.

## Testimony

The idea that the truth of the work designates the capacity to break open congealed ways of thinking, feeling, and acting underscores the conjuncture between the work's exemplification of a way of inhabiting the world and the prospective dimension of the claim it makes. By inventing or discovering new modalities of thought, feeling, and action, individual works disquiet habituated orientations and understandings. The "rule" that the work summons here acquires its true force and ontological vehemence. For through exemplifying this "rule," each work attests that the solution it provides is *the* fitting response to the question, problem, or crisis for which it is the answer.

The force of the claim that a work makes inheres in this capacity for breaking open the world of our everyday experiences. The air of rightness exuded by a work conveys this force. Gadamer points out that a claim is the ground for the fulfillment of a demand.<sup>58</sup> As such, the demand exerts its effect only as an unfulfilled claim. The commitment proper to the work's ontological vehemence here bears out the anticipatory structure of the truth of the work. For just as a claim that exists against someone demands its enforcement, the apprehension of a work as a "fitting production" enjoins the listener, reader, or spectator to make her own the work's exemplary expression of a world that the work alone reveals.

The way that *mimesis* explodes the univocity of the classical concept of truth illuminates the connection between the work's exemplarity and its worlding power. For where it is a question of the work's refiguration of reality by transcending the real from within, no adequation within the existing order is sufficient. The transcendence of reality within the world configured by a work is the spring of the work's prospective claim. Reality, Gadamer remarks, "always stands in a horizon of desired or feared or, at any rate, still undecided future possibilities."<sup>59</sup> Nowhere is the power of imagination more apparent than in the way that individual works reanimate our horizons. For through giving voice to alternatives that they project, such works also play a part in forming our hopes, fears, and expectations.

The way that individual works proffer ways of inhabiting the world through disrupting accepted conventions and expectations is akin to the way that exemplary moral and political acts transform the ordinary course of everyday events. Might the work of art, Ricœur in fact asks, "with its conjunction of singularity and communicability, . . . [be] a model for thinking the notion of testimony"?<sup>60</sup> If one is serious about aesthetic experience's transposition into the domains of ethics and politics, he explains, "one would have to take into account the two main aspects of the work: its singularity and its communicability, with the particular form of universality that the latter implies."<sup>61</sup> For just as the truth of the work rests on the singular work's power to proffer a world that is open to all, "in the realm of extreme moral choices, we find [an analogous relation of] exemplarity and communicability"<sup>62</sup> in acts that initiate new courses of action.

This transposition of aesthetic experience into lateral domains further accentuates the place that a work's exemplarity has with respect to the demand that *mimesis* makes on the way that we think about truth. When it comes to a "fitting production," *mimesis*, Ricœur insists, "is ahead of our concept of reference, the real, and truth."<sup>63</sup> Breaking with the concept of truth as adequation not only liberates *mimesis* from the representative illusion; highlighting the conjunction of the work's singularity and communicability also emphasizes the temporal character of the claim that each work makes. The conjunction of the work's singularity and

communicability highlights the paradox of this claim's universality. This claim seeks its normativity in the invitation that issues from the work (or, in the moral and political realms, in the injunction that issues from an exemplary act). For each time a listener, reader, or spectator grasps the fit of the work as a model for a new way of inhabiting the world, the claim that the work makes refashions the world in accordance with its own rejoinder to the question, problem, or crisis for which it is the answer.

The communicability of the "acts that we admire ethically"<sup>64</sup> has its counterpart in the work's power to augment the field of our experiences. The testimony proffered by individual acts of sacrifice, commitment, and devotion is the analogue, in the realm of difficult moral choices, to the truth of a musical work, literary text, or a work of art. Like a work, exemplary acts also carry the force of those convictions enjoined by the "rule" that each summons. Acts that meet the demand of the political or moral crisis to which each is the singularly fitting response thus give a face to courage and hope through the testimony offered by exemplary lives: Aung San Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, Mother Theresa.

Moral and political acts that we admire commend themselves to us by reason of their fittingness. The injunction to "follow after" the act springs from our convictions regarding its suitability to the situation; the act speaks to us by means of our apprehension of this fit. Its exemplarity is therefore a source for our convictions regarding our own moral and political conduct. The effect of being drawn to follow the example set by the act, Ricœur comments, is "really the equivalent of the communicability of the work of art."<sup>65</sup> German, he adds, has a word that French does not to "express this capacity for following after, this exemplarity: *Nachfolge*."<sup>66</sup> For, through taking initiatives based on examples that we admire, we make those examples our own in new situations in which we find ourselves, and which again call for imagination in the exercise of good judgment.

This exercise of judgment constitutes one of the principal features of the hermeneutics of testimony. Judgment in fact figures both in Ricœur's semantic analysis of the term, and in his treatment of the philosophical problem of testimony as "testimony of the absolute."<sup>67</sup> The term testimony, Ricœur explains, "should be applied to words, works, actions, and to lives which attest to an intention, an inspiration, an idea at the heart of experience and history which nonetheless transcend experience and history."<sup>68</sup> For him, the irruption of the term's religious meaning thus opens up an absolutely new dimension within the semantic complex of testimony's profane senses.

The irruption of this religious meaning seems at first to refute any connection between the work of art's exemplarity and the testimony proffered by exemplary acts. According to Ricœur, the new dimension opened up conserves the meanings that inhere in the initial semantic complex. At the same time, the quasi-empirical meaning of the act of testifying receives a new significance in a theology of testimony that preserves a "certain narrative kernel . . . in strict union with the confession of faith."<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the situation of the trial, in which testimony is given and weighed, acquires a new dimension within the context of the great trial in which the "kingdom and its justice is the stake of an immense contest between God and the Prince of the world."<sup>70</sup> The relation between the witness and his act also acquires a new significance with the irruption of the prophetic and kerygmatic dimension. Here, as in the profane order, the "disciple is martyr because he is a witness, not the inverse."<sup>71</sup> When in a limit situation where the "test of conviction becomes the price of a life,"<sup>72</sup> the sacrificial act itself constitutes the "testimony of conscience" in its devotion to a cause. Within the context of this biblical exegesis, the faithful

witness is the one whose life and death manifest the light according to which the world is to be judged.

This hermeneutics of testimony is tantamount to a project of liberation under the name of the absolute. The originary affirmation that Ricœur opposes to the claim to absolute knowledge opens the way to the reciprocal relation between the “promotion of consciousness and the recognition of the absolute in its signs.”<sup>73</sup> Here, testimony is the “expression of the freedom that we desire to be.”<sup>74</sup> For Ricœur, a hermeneutics of testimony and a criteriology of the divine, following Jean Nabert, are as inseparable as are exteriority and height. (Exteriority and height, Ricœur explains, are also inseparable to the extent that one’s conscience cannot bring about the divestment of one’s ego “without the testimony of certain acts, certain lives, that, despite their radical contingency, their plain historicity, speak in the name of the absolute.”<sup>75</sup>) Just as Nabert observes that “the painter makes everything a testimony that awaits a witness,”<sup>76</sup> the testimony rendered by such acts and lives gives something to be interpreted. Each time, the crisis provoked by the testimony of exemplary acts and lives calls for a judgment and a decision as a witness to these signs of freedom’s actualization.

This singular relation between the act and the call to conscience that issues from it lends support to the idea that the work of art might be a model for thinking about testimony. At the same time, the testimony given by the act that transcends its historically contingent conditions has a counterpart in the claim that a work makes. The work’s vehemence, I argued above, springs from the work’s redescription of reality in the light of the world that the work itself unfolds. The “passion for the possible,”<sup>77</sup> to which the hermeneutics of testimony itself attests, is also operative in the claims that works make. This passion is hope’s answer to all *amor fati*. And yet, the claims that works make, and the injunction that issues from the testimony offered by exemplary lives, belong to different regions. For the latter, there is “no other testimony rendered to height, to the glory of the infinite, than the testimony of exteriority, of the assignment of responsibility”<sup>78</sup> through the call to conscience. For the former, the world that the work expresses marks the irruption of an alternative without injunction or constraint. Only an aesthetic gnosticism could confuse the hermeneutics of testimony’s assumption of responsibility with works’ fictive explorations. And yet, to the extent that these imaginative explorations refigure the practical field, they also play a part in the world’s transformation.

The prospective dimension of the claim or injunction that issues from an individual work or act underscores the connection between the work or act’s exemplarity and hope’s practical and existential necessity.<sup>79</sup> In citing the example of St. Francis Assisi, Ricœur emphasizes that the order, which St. Francis addresses to his followers, passes by way of the injunction of one single individual that inspires another. Here, Ricœur points out, we are again in the sphere of reflective judgment, where “communicability does not lie in applying a rule to a case but in the fact that it is the case that summons its rule; and it calls for the latter, precisely, in rendering itself communicable.”<sup>80</sup> Here the individual case engenders its normativity by reason of its exemplarity. By summoning the “rule” to which it alone attests, the singular act seeks its normativity in the claim to universality that stems from the injunction issuing from the act.

I cannot stress enough the connection between Ricœur’s definition of *mimesis* as refiguration and the capacity of individual acts to fight against the narrowing of the field of our experiences. At the same time, the difference between the prophetic character of manifestations that testify to the absolute and the prospective dimension of works that break open congealed horizons serves as a caution against the spiritual gnosticism that plagued romantic aesthetics.

Like the exemplary act, the work of art commends itself to us by virtue of our grasp of its fittingness vis-à-vis the demands of the situation but without injunction or constraint. For Ricœur, giving the singular expression of this fit the “best chance of the greatest universality”<sup>81</sup> would mean following the requirements of the work’s singularity and communicability to its end. Whereas Hannah Arendt highlights the “retrospective view of the *spectator* over the prospective view of the *actors* of history”<sup>82</sup> in reflective judgment, Ricœur stresses the connection between the exemplarity of fitting acts and the handholds they provide for hope. For him, the “acknowledged exemplarity of works of art, like that of great events, would not constitute a pledge of hope if exemplarity did not serve as . . . a proof, for hope.”<sup>83</sup> Attending to “the work of an imagination invited to ‘think more’”<sup>84</sup> thus turns the regard for exemplary acts and works toward future expectations.

## Conclusion

As a model for thinking about testimony, the work of art’s capacity for discovering modalities of experience beyond our everyday ways of engaging with the world bears out the power of imagination. Through exploding the univocity of the classical conception of truth, this capacity not only distinguishes the truth of art from that of adequation; transposed laterally onto the ethical and political planes, this capacity also has its analog in the power to initiate a new course of action in the midst of history. In the same way that *mimesis* demands more of our thinking about truth, the testimony of exemplary lives requires that we acknowledge the communicability of singular acts. If, as Ricœur suggests, “we lack a sufficiently multivocal concept of truth . . . that would fuse, at its margins, with the concept of rightness,”<sup>85</sup> perhaps it is because we fail to grasp how, as “fitting productions,” individual works and acts seek their normativity by way of the invitation or injunction that is extended to all. Adorno’s refusal to accept the risk that this entails relegated music and art’s truth to a hibernatory refuge. Conversely, the exemplification by a work or an act of the response demanded by the situation provides a practical handhold for the wager we make through following after.

The solution to the paradox of the work’s singularity and communicability leads again to the idea that the capacity for forging new paths is a function of the powers of thought, imagination, and good judgment in situation. The conjunction of the work’s singularity and communicability in aesthetic experience is a model for the search for normativity that issues from exemplary works and acts. For through summoning its “rule,” a work sets the play of imagination and understanding to work. Only this play, as it is incarnated in the work, is communicable. Hence only this play can be shared. Gadamer reminds us that, through giving rise to thought, this free play of imagination and understanding lets us “look out beyond everything that is given in experience.”<sup>86</sup> This “looking out beyond” gives the search for normativity its anticipatory structure. Consequently, the “rule” that the work summons binds this search to the apprehension of the fit that the work exemplifies, which in principle is open to everyone.

The transposition of aesthetic experience into other domains, however, does not eliminate the difference between aesthetic experience and the exercise of moral and political judgment on the practical plane. On the contrary, failing to differentiate between the force of the claim that emanates from the work’s air of rightness and the authority of the injunction that

issues from an exemplary moral or political act risks moralizing the one and aestheticizing the other.

This caution is directed as much against a deconstructive fascination with the representative illusion as it is aimed at giving music and art's power to break open new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting its due. Through opening the world to us and us to the world anew, works bear out their ontological vehemence. This vehemence justifies the confidence that groups and communities have in cultural works that attest to the communities' desire, will, and effort to exist. This confidence in turn plays a critical role in the quest for identity and the struggle for recognition. The claims that cultural works make, I would even suggest, here join themselves to a sense of obligation to honor the debt to others and to the past. At the threshold of this inquiry, the notion that the work is a model for thinking about testimony warrants a fuller engagement with the idea that *mimesis* is ahead of our concepts of truth on the plane of cultural politics.

- <sup>1</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Commitment," in Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, Geog Lukás, *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1977), 180.
- <sup>2</sup> Adorno, "Commitment," 180. For Adorno, the "notion of a 'message' in art, even when politically radical, already contains an accommodation to the world" (193).
- <sup>3</sup> Adorno, "Commitment," 191.
- <sup>4</sup> Adorno, "Commitment," 178.
- <sup>5</sup> Adorno, "Commitment," 178.
- <sup>6</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 7-8; see Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969); Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Fetish Character of Music and the Regression in Listening," in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 1991).
- <sup>7</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 8; see Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1989), 204.
- <sup>8</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 8.
- <sup>9</sup> Adorno, "Commitment," 194; see Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 310-311.
- <sup>10</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E. F. H. Jephcott (Great Britain: Verso, 1974), 247.
- <sup>11</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 133.
- <sup>12</sup> Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 247.
- <sup>13</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1987), 119. Original emphasis.
- <sup>14</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 52. Anchoring art's claim to truth in anthropogenic mimetic impulses cannot save the paradox at the heart of Adorno's aesthetic theory. Consequently, the recollection in art of a condition of freedom gives way to that melancholic condition in which art projects its semblance of this condition "at the price of [any] real reconciliation" (52). For Adorno, the recollection in art of this condition of freedom is "the anamnesis of precisely what does not exist for-an-other" (74). But then the trace of memory in art's semblance of truth only preserves in its secularized form that magic identification with nature from which, for Adorno as for Max Horkheimer, the subject's mimetic comportment toward the world springs. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 53-54; see Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1979).
- <sup>15</sup> George Levine, "Introduction: Reclaiming the Aesthetic," in *Aesthetics and Ideology*, ed. George Levine (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Baswell Blackwell Ltd., 1990).
- <sup>16</sup> See Lambert Zuidervaart, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1991); Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans.

Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 13 ff.; Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 74.

<sup>18</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 131.

<sup>19</sup> Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno, "Something's Missing: A Discussion between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing," in Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), 12.

<sup>20</sup> Levine, "Introduction," 22.

<sup>21</sup> Janet Wolf, *The Social Production of Art* (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1981), 86.

<sup>22</sup> See for example Fred Everett Maus, "Music as Drama," *Music Theory Spectrum* 10 (1988); see also Jean-Jacques Nattiez, "Can One Speak of Narrative in Music?," *Journal of the Royal Musical Society* 115: 2 (1990).

<sup>23</sup> Paul Ricœur, *A Ricœur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdés (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 122.

<sup>24</sup> See my *Hermeneutics and Music Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 2010); see also my "Ricœur and Musicology: Music, Hermeneutics and Aesthetic Experience," in *Ricœur across the Disciplines*, ed. Scott Davidson (London: Continuum, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Ricœur, *A Ricœur Reader*, 133.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 180.

<sup>27</sup> Séan Ó hEochaidh et. al., *Fairy Legends from Donegal* (Dublin: Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann, 1977), 160, (trans. 161); see W. B. Yeats, *The Book of Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland* (London: Bounty Books, 1994 [1888; 1892]), 50. In the version in W. B. Yeats' compilation of Irish fairy and folk tales, Lusmore is the nickname 'put upon . . . [the first hunchback] by reason of him always wearing a sprig of the fairy cap, or lusmore (the foxglove), in his little straw hat"(49). I am indebted to Lillis Ó Laoire for bringing this story to my attention, and who in his lecture "Chonaic mé na deora/I saw the tears: Towards an Aesthetics of Gaelic Song" relates this tale to the study of Gaelic aesthetics of song. In his lecture, Ó Laoire emphasizes that the "metrical improvement of the fairies' song [by the first hunchback] is judged to be whole and pleasing, conforming to good taste and, indeed, enhancing the entertainment." I am also grateful to the Fulbright Commission for its support during my time at the Centre for Irish Studies at the National University of Ireland, Galway.

<sup>28</sup> Yeats, *Book of Fairy and Folk Tales*, 52. Yeats's version names the second hunchback Jack Madden.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Ricœur, *The Just*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 95.

<sup>30</sup> Ricœur, *The Just*, 95.

- <sup>31</sup> Ricœur, *The Just*, 95. Ricœur adds that “we cannot pass over in silence the priority Kant himself gives to aesthetic judgment in relation to teleological judgment. This priority results from the fact that the natural order thought in terms of the idea of finality itself has an *aesthetic* dimension in virtue of its very relation to the subject and not to the object. Order affects us in that it pleases us. With this, aesthetic judgment is called for by teleological judgment as the first component of reflective judgment, hence as regards pure reflection.”
- <sup>32</sup> See for example John Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departures from Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). Neubauer points out that the rediscovery in 1416 of Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* sparked a revival in the interest of rhetoric, which Joachim Burmeister applied to music in the early seventeenth century. See Aristotle, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, trans. Lane Cooper (New York: Meredith, 1932). The power that Aristotle ascribes to the emotions by means of which the speaker moves her or his listeners has a counterpart in music’s affective vehemence. See also Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Ernest Barker. Revised by R. F. Stalley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Music for Aristotle affects its listeners’ dispositions insofar as music produces its effect on the “character of the soul” (310).
- <sup>33</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 59.
- <sup>34</sup> Ricœur, *Interpretation Theory*, 59.
- <sup>35</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 85.
- <sup>36</sup> Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, 85.
- <sup>37</sup> Paul Ricœur, “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination and Feeling,” in *On Metaphor*, ed. Sheldon Sacks (Chicago: Chicago University Press), 154.
- <sup>38</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 179.
- <sup>39</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 178.
- <sup>40</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 179.
- <sup>41</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Time and Narrative vol. 3*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 162. Ricœur compares this notion of style with the “unifying role intuitively assigned by the reader to the implied author. . . . This singularity of the solution, replying to the singularity of the problem, can take on a proper name, that of the author. . . . Naming the work in terms of its author implies no conjecture about the psychology of invention or of discovery, therefore no assertion concerning the presumed intention of the inventor; it implies only the singularity of a solution to a problem. This comparison reinforces the right of the category of implied author to figure in a rhetoric of fiction.”
- <sup>42</sup> Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 234.

- <sup>43</sup> Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 234.
- <sup>44</sup> Ricœur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 239.
- <sup>45</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 180.
- <sup>46</sup> Ricœur, "Metaphorical Process," 145.
- <sup>47</sup> Paul Ricœur, *A Ricœur Reader*, 105.
- <sup>48</sup> Ricœur, *A Ricœur Reader*, 126. "Metaphor is the figure of style which enables the preparatory stage to interrupt the conceptual formation because, in the metaphorical process, the movement towards the genre is arrested by the resistance of the difference and, in some way, intercepted by the figure of rhetoric. Imagination thus identified is undoubtedly the productive, schematizing imagination."
- <sup>49</sup> Ricœur, "Metaphorical Process," 148.
- <sup>50</sup> Ricœur, "Metaphorical Process," 148.
- <sup>51</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 46.
- <sup>52</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 173-174.
- <sup>53</sup> Ricœur, *A Ricœur Reader*, 153.
- <sup>54</sup> Ricœur, *A Ricœur Reader*, 153.
- <sup>55</sup> Ricœur, *A Ricœur Reader*, 153.
- <sup>56</sup> See Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 173. Ricœur defines the "function of refiguration as *mimetic*." The function of *mimesis*, he therefore explains, "is not to help us recognize objects but to discover dimensions of experience that did not exist prior to the work."
- <sup>57</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 180.
- <sup>58</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 127.
- <sup>59</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 112.
- <sup>60</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 182.
- <sup>61</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 182.
- <sup>62</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 182.
- <sup>63</sup> Ricœur, *A Ricœur Reader*, 153.
- <sup>64</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 182.
- <sup>65</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 182-183.
- <sup>66</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 183.

- <sup>67</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1980), 120. Ricœur stresses that this testimony remains subject to a work of interpretation. The “judgment to which [this] testimony makes an appeal is identical to the judgment by which self-consciousness, by being laid bare, sifts the predicates of the divine.” However this identity, Ricœur emphasizes, has to be interpreted. Hence a “constantly widening gap occurs between the reflexive judgment which produces the criteria of the divine by an entirely interior operation, and the historical judgment which is used to group together externally the meaning of the given testimonies. The fundamental identity of this double operation becomes the stakes of the hermeneutics of the absolute” (148).
- <sup>68</sup> Ricœur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 119-120.
- <sup>69</sup> Ricœur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 133.
- <sup>70</sup> Ricœur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 141.
- <sup>71</sup> Ricœur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 132.
- <sup>72</sup> Ricœur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 129.
- <sup>73</sup> Ricœur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 151. Ricœur points to three indices that mark out the impossibility of any absolute knowledge. The first index of this impossibility “expresses the impotence of fixing the criteriology of the divine in a closed system” (152). The second “expresses the impotence of consciousness to bring all the signs [of the absolute] together in a coherent whole” (152). The third “expresses the impotence of identifying absolute reflection and absolute testimony itself raised to the rank of proof in the grand trial of meaning” (152-153). See Paul Ricœur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). For Ricœur, the “kind of height that reflexive philosophy confesses indicates the superiority of an originary affirmation that is not numerically distinct from empirical consciousness. The adequation of this empirical consciousness with the spiritual act that constitutes it even defines the itinerary for the liberation of freedom” (113).
- <sup>74</sup> Ricœur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 151.
- <sup>75</sup> Ricœur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 116. For Ricœur, the “moral conscience is first of all the protest against the unjustifiable. Its height lies in the demand for justification apart from which evil cannot be taken as unjustifiable. Its exteriority lies in the testimony of those acts whose ethical significance results from their position on the trajectory of ‘approaches to justification.’ . . . Therefore, the hermeneutics of testimony can no more be separated from the problematic of the unjustifiable and of justification than this problematic can be unfolded outside of a hermeneutics of testimony” (118).
- <sup>76</sup> Cited by Ricœur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 117.
- <sup>77</sup> Ricœur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 206.
- <sup>78</sup> Ricœur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 124.
- <sup>79</sup> See Ricœur, *Figuring the Sacred*. According to Ricœur, the practical and existential necessity of hope is already implicit in the structure of action as the condition of the actualization of freedom. For him, the

"kind of dialectic that rules the relation between freedom and its full actualization" (216) is therefore the philosophical equivalent of hope's law of superabundance. Insofar as the problem of evil for the philosopher "belongs to the problematic of the actualization of freedom" (215), the anticipation and expectation of the fulfillment of the will's desire for reconciliation makes hope a part of the system of thought as such. See also Ricœur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 162 ff.

<sup>80</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 183.

<sup>81</sup> Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction*, 180.

<sup>82</sup> Ricœur, *The Just*, 104. Arendt's claim in "her volume on Judging—which we must not forget was left unfinished—can first be understood as a wager, namely, that it is finally more profitable to attempt to disengage a concept of political judgment from the theory of judgment of taste than to bind this conception to the theory of teleological judgment *via* a philosophy of history. This is a large wager because the ties between the philosophy of history and the teleological judgment are more immediately perceptible in Kant's work, if only because Kant did write out his philosophy of history, whereas the political philosophy Hannah Arendt attributes to him is in large part a reconstruction, even if it remains inchoate, even virtual" (100-101).

<sup>83</sup> Ricœur, *The Just*, 106.

<sup>84</sup> Ricœur, *The Just*, 99.

<sup>85</sup> Ricœur, *A Ricœur Reader*, 153.

<sup>86</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 166.