

German Idealism's Concept of Nature in the 19th Century

'Of what avail, by the way, can philosophical systems be, which are only spun out of conceptions of this sort and have for their substance mere flimsy husks of thoughts like these? They must of necessity be exceedingly empty, poor, and therefore also dreadfully tiresome.'¹

Schopenhauer, *The Four-Fold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*

German Idealism must be read as an event culminating from the unique circumstances occurring during the late Enlightenment. Though the process had begun slow and often doubted itself, these thinkers in moments of dogged resolve had wished to deepen and even further radicalize some of its most troubling aims. Their hope was that for taking this risk they could open up the potentials of human freedom as had not been achieved previously before until then. Hegel and Schopenhauer each were heavily involved in this period with Hegel seeing its inauguration and Schopenhauer railing against its eventual dominance. Neither argued from any sense of ecclesiastical necessity but rather took as first principles the newly developing 19th century conception of nature, and we will see how they have arrived at this point separately. They also found themselves initially responding very directly to the work of Kant, and stake out claims to who would end up being viewed as the more rightful heir.

The concept of nature is distinct from that of matter for Kant² through being constituted by the collecting of laws over and above merely as a group of inter-related perceptible, corporeal bodies. We are forced to begin with to work with nature as a concept because definitionally we are not able to access the noumenal side of it that would make up the essential aspect of the real things that are actually in nature, so we can not say what nature in itself is. The formalization of nature as such does not govern the bodies but is our way of representing and diagramming the actions of the bodies that are perceived through the sensory apparatus as they are seen to move and interact. That we have sensory perceptions, again, does not give us direct access to nature outside of us but that this is the case does not make the appearance of the perceptions fail to occur.

Subjective experiences can be said to be birthed of necessary laws so much as they are of an object present before others - they must involve pure, universal concepts of understanding. Since the sense of being able to be present before others here is interchangeable with that of being present before any possible subject, Kant says that, "Objective validity and necessary universal validity (for everyone) are therefore interchangeable concepts."³ Why are universals only necessary for somebody while objectivity should be held as being true in

¹Schopenhauer, A. (1994). On the fourfold root of the principle of sufficient reason. La Salle, IL: Open Court. 116.

²Kant, I., & Hatfield, G. (1997). Prolegomena to any future metaphysics that will be able to come forward as science with selections from the Critique of pure reason (p. 46). Cambridge [England: Cambridge University Press.

³Kant, I., & Hatfield, G. 51.

some kind of general sense? It may be said that they are acquired by individuals however they will come into conflict with one another over who has the correct definition for each given universal, and so it must be a yet non-existing collective society from the future who is able to achieve such a feat. It is no one individual's knowledge of the universal which is significant but the very fact of the anonymity of randomly selecting an individual who will certainly have knowledge of that universal which matters.

In regard to the decision made on "conditions of possibility of experience,"⁴ Hegel adds that the process is communal and not merely personal. It does follow with Kant's notion that this activate process of understanding is a "legislature", which after producing the transcendental aesthetic Kant reached the conclusion there was nowhere left to locate it but within the self. It will not literally be a political body that decides the categories of experience but the dialectical interplay of different persons relating their separate understanding of the categories to one another. We should only doubt that Hegel's addition will necessarily bring the process any more assurance, as he well knows the community comes with all its own worries. Therefore, Žižek claims that, for Hegel, "Social life is condemned to the 'spurious infinity' of the eternal oscillation between stable civic life and wartime perturbations,"⁵ but that social life in particular as it has been up until now appears to be an indefinite cyclical process does not make it so.

This only provides the outline of the formal sense of nature⁶ in the way that it can be conceived as by us, its material sense as projected conceptually demands that we involve the totality of all the possible objects of experience together. It is through transcendental argument for the categories of experience that an exploration is carried out on what may hold necessarily so that appearance should happen as it does and in any potential way that it could go on to continue. This hyperphysical object itself cannot be an object of experience though, it is what is entirely beyond the capacities of nature that appears infinite to produce within the space of a finite being. All there is for us is the series of individual appearances each occurring on its own.⁷ We attempt to connect these appearances systematically although none yet has shown to be proven successful. The Kantian categories themselves are essentially a complete disaster and that is roughly the best attempt that has been made within the last three centuries to correctly define the exact categories of experience that would hold for all possible perceptible experiences. It would seem rather that we are always finding new categories and redefining or abandoning old ones as we go along, and it has so far been fine in fact for not any one of those categories to have been held as necessary at all. That reality seems to secrete representations onto organisms

⁴Kant, I., & Hatfield, G. 71.

⁵Slavoj, Ž, & Bryant, L. (2011). Is it Still Possible to be a Hegelian Today. In *The speculative turn: Continental materialism and realism* (p. 222). Melbourne, [Victoria] Australia: Re.press.

⁶Kant, I., & Hatfield, G. 48.

⁷Kant, I., & Hatfield, G. 70.

does not make it so that they will ultimately all become systematized within one single framework. It is simple enough to think of a thought machine which generates appearances that have nothing to do with each other and yet appear in sequential order.

While the laws have been established as in some sense shared, they are also mired in a great deal of conflict. Schopenhauer, for example, argues that “The transition from one key to an entirely different one, since it altogether breaks the connection with what went before, is like death, for the individual ends in it; but the will which appeared in this individual lives after him as before him, appearing in other individuals, whose consciousness, however, has no connection with his...”⁸ This for Hegel would consist in the worst of all possible outcome as life would assuredly go on continuously in an identical pattern with no way out breaking out of it. Even a fully real systematic break with what came before would still include the seeds inside of it that actually gave it root. Schopenhauer on the other hand, finds beauty in its melodic property: “And corresponding to this the nature of melody is a constant digression and deviation from the key-note in a thousand ways, not only to the harmonious intervals to the third and dominant, but to every tone, to the dissonant sevenths and to the superfluous degrees; yet there always follows a constant return to the key-note.”⁹ What can be established as this key-note if not a category of the mind proven to be necessary through transcendental argument as had already been rejected by Schopenhauer himself in a prophetically modernist twist?

We might examine then the very laws through which the forces of cause and effect are said to take place which always must in some way precede appearance if not any aspect of the totality of nature itself. Schopenhauer argues that causation gets shown through experience solely due to the existence and nature of the will: “The condition of this right, the point of time and space at which it becomes valid, is given by causality, but the explanation founded upon this law only extends thus far. The force itself is a manifestation of will...”¹⁰ Although, we should be careful to consider here that Schopenhauer operates from a very precise notion of the will which is not simply identical with the acting out of apparent human desires. In the ideal case for him we will find that, “We shall now no longer, as novices, wait, attempt, and grope about in order to see what we really desire and are able to do, but we know this once for all, and in every choice we have only to apply general principles to particular cases, and arrive at once at a decision.”¹¹ He says of the decision that it, “...enters the sphere of the intellect altogether empirically, as the final conclusion of the matter; but yet it proceeded from the inner nature, the intelligible character, of the individual will in its conflict with given motives, and therefore with complete necessity.” The general principles then will fall out of the conflicting motives such as they

⁸Schopenhauer, Arthur, and E.F.J Payne. (1966). *The World as Will and Representation*. (p. 340). New York: Dover.

⁹Schopenhauer, Arthur. P. 399.

¹⁰Schopenhauer, Arthur. P.190.

¹¹Schopenhauer, Arthur. P.393.

appear against the background of nature, as we have already seen how they are not to be identified with simple pure processes representing physical laws. He goes on to add, “The intellect can do nothing more than bring out clearly and fully the nature of the motives; it cannot determine the will itself; for the will is quite inaccessible to it, and, as we have seen, cannot be investigated.” Therefore, further investigation into the nature of the causation of the will can be seen to be fruitless as the decision made by the will is immanent to nature so much as it is present. It cannot be shown to be a condition of nature’s having existed already through as was attempted through transcendental argument with the categories of the mind.

So far, we have been assuming access not to all of nature but at least to certain reasonable parts of it. Hegel will set about trying to “invert” the world of forces exerted through causation into a second world of law, both of which are present at the same time to the understanding¹². This is important to distinguish as we cannot know what conditions in particular end up governing the will’s decision when it gets made empirically, but we might still be able to formalize the types of conditions in advance that are able to formalize decision as it has been seen to get made in prior acts of the will. The system of conditions arrived at may in fact end up effecting the will’s decision as it gets made, even if it cannot be known definitely in advance. But it cannot be equated just with the forces as they appear, as they are not the real forces in nature actually conditioning the decision, so it must instead be representational or diagrammatic of them and possibly as Hegel speculates rather in a moral sense.

He clarifies that the fields of nature and of morality are characterized by the unique sets of forces operating on each one.¹³ In this sense nature becomes a singular form of a generality of forces, whereas we usually view it to be their immediate totality. Exceptions happen often to our constructions of the physical rules of nature, and this makes more sense than that they are imposed purely by the secretions through experience of an outer necessity¹⁴ – akin to a sort of telegraphic immediate language we don’t have access to. These errors and illusions in appearances would not need to be imparted ever by regular tranquility. Kant must always worry any error which proceeds directly from following the law results in an impossible recognition of what is taking place as part of the noumenal realm. Whereas for Hegel, the world is rational and made up of rational laws, so while like Kant we may find ourselves in error, there is no approximation in deducing the laws. The social and communal elements of conceptualization historically condition the understanding that may be reached of them within a present situation. As second order conceptual rules linked diagrammatically to appearances though, and not as the pure set of categories that condition the mind, they are open to modification. Laws so much as they become founded should primarily motivate internal action rather than reflection

¹²Hegel, G., & Baillie, J. (1967). *The Philosophy of Mind*. (p. 96). Harper Colophon.

¹³Hegel, G., & Baillie, J. 74.

¹⁴Hegel, G., & Baillie, J. 144.

of our relation to world which for Hegel is literally just another aspect of ourselves. Contradictions should be accounted for on one side and negated on the other by recognition of their status as substantial content-bearing appearances like anything else.

There remain open questions about whether this process is necessary, or if it can be completed. If we have certainty in advance that it will not be done it is unclear why this should be attempted for all possible forces. Hegel noticeably fails to account for the sort of cosmological forces that Kant sets directly in contrast with the field of moral law¹⁵. We might as with Kant want to isolate experiences of the sublime which refuse all attempts at becoming fully grasped by rational cognition's production of their mere images.¹⁶ While presented with great intensity of force, these would not be subject to falling under any comprehensible law as can be done for all kinds of 'regular' quantifiable experiences, whatever majority of experiences those may appear to be. There is no rule to transform what would be the intuition for a real sublime object into the concept of it. The intuition of a square is dealt with through categories of quantity, relation, etc. even if the predication of those categories does not constitute the existence of that thing but its appearance. None of the categories are able to adequately quantify the sublime in any way, not even on the order of appearance. An appearance that is categorized is made ordinary and familiar by its very nature. We will not arrive at a fully conceptual understanding of the sublime, but the force of its impression leaves a mark on our intuitive capacity – a reason is constantly being informed by the new senses derived by the intuition.

Consider our experiences of things in time: some events happen prior to other events and other events come after those. Kant asks us, then, to think of everything being in time together all at once, and he says this cannot really be done since, "With the concept of things in general abstraction is made from every kind of intuition of them."¹⁷ If we have a rule which takes temporal experiences in the first temporally well-ordered world and changes them into attributes that are determinant of things that are in the second atemporalized world, we are left with a process that could only produce nonsensical input and break up such a function. Specifically, the attributes of the things in the second world need not correspond in any way to those in the first one except by the arbitrary rules we accord to them.

Kant speculates quite openly about the very possibility for the persistence of a kind of diminished life enduring after death when he wonders about the possibility that, "If the mode of sensibility through which transcendental (and for now entirely unknown) objects appear as a material world should cease, then not all intuition would thereby be terminated."¹⁸ He carefully recognizes, "It might

¹⁵Kant, I., & Abbott, T. (2004). Critique of practical reason and other works on the theory of ethics (p. 141). New York: Barnes & Noble Books.

¹⁶Kant, I., & Walker, N. (2007). Critique of judgement (p. 98). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁷Kant, I., & Guyer, P. 181.

¹⁸Kant, I., & Guyer, P. 438.

well be possible for the very same unknown object to continue to be cognized by the thinking subject,” because this constitutes the dangerous continuation of an entirely passive series of intuitions occurring without unification being done by some form of apperception with a faculty of understanding even if not that one of our own.

It is a little strange to find that there is nothing other than human brains to take the place of the object for Kant to have been alluding to. He often speaks of the freely acting subject in an ambiguous sense and refuses to refer to them as human beings in the liberal tradition of his century. Conversely, there are no other things in the entire known universe which we might even potentially attribute the apperceptive being to. Schopenhauer warns here however that¹⁹, “Man alone carries about with him, in abstract conceptions, the certainty of his death.” So it is only man’s particular capacity for understanding that brings him to obsess over this point which is not even so much as accessible to other kinds of beings. He goes on to say that²⁰, “Armed with the knowledge we have given him, he would await with indifference the death that hastens towards him on the wings of time. He would regard it as a false illusion, an impotent spectre, which frightens the weak but has no power over him.” So, for him rather, it need not even be a matter of speculation.

It seems all too easy again to imagine that some of the categories which we happen to measure the world by reveal a deep essential nature of man because of the very tautological necessity of these (human) categories. No matter how pressing this feeling may be, it is possible to take a theoretical stance against it. Jacobi explains of the categories that, “As mere prejudices of the human understanding, they would be valid only for men and for the sensibility that is proper to humans; so, they would be valid only under conditions which would, in my judgment, deprive them of all value.”²¹ The urgency with which it gets demanded we capitulate to this anthropomorphism only reveals its lack of faith in establishing itself as the being correct in the end. Kant even in his time felt that time was short, admitting that he, “Must proceed frugally,” because his is clearly an almost impossible task when he intends, “to carry out my plan of providing the metaphysics both of nature and of morals.”²² Regardless of whether he refers to himself as an individual does not distinguish his role in the totality of the state of nature, which merely reflects an internal categorical systemization of objects that are immediately accessible to the subject in which they are made as appearances.

Hegel argues that, “The content of the world of pictorial thought freely unfolds itself ... gathering itself round the individuality of a hero who, however, in his strength and beauty feels his life is broken and sorrowfully awaits an early

¹⁹Schopenhauer, Arthur. P 363.

²⁰Schopenhauer, Arthur. P 366.

²¹Jacobi, F., & Giovanni, G. (1994). David Hume on Faith, or Idealism and Realism, a Dialogue, in *The main philosophical writings and the novel Allwill* (p. 296). Montréal [Que.: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

²²Kant, I., & Guyer, P. 123.

death. For the individuality that is in itself firmly established and actual is banished to its extreme and split into its moments which have not yet found and united themselves. The one individual moment, the abstract non-actual one, is Necessity...”²³ Not even the heroic stance will be sufficient to save us, but rather it is necessity itself that will do the work of moving the world forward – which means that boredom will slow nothing down. He further claims that, “But apart from the fact that the study of living nature, and of the general relation of given things to purposes, can be vitiated by the triviality of the purposes, or even by imputations of purposes and their relations that are outright childish. So, nature itself as merely alive is still not really that in terms of which the genuine determination of the Idea of God can be grasped...”²⁴

Our primary confrontation with the sublime is governed by our failure to properly capture a sense of the mathematical infinite, which consists in immense syntheses of numerical structure. Even in Kant’s time it was already quite clear to him that concerning both mathematics and natural science, “We do not need to ask whether it is possible (for it is actual), but only: how it is possible.”²⁵ And what they show ultimately is not the fullness of their own positive content, but the necessary positing of an empty space made up by transcendental subjectivity in addition to them. Kant will go on to say that we must seek out the origin of the appearance of this empty space because²⁶, “Appearances must be subsumed under the concept of substance,” and so much as it serves as a real event it, “must be subsumed under the concept of an effect in relation to a cause.” It is important to note that this is an assumption of ordering, and that this can only be done after the fact by the very transcendental subject itself as posited by the understanding. It cannot be reached as intuitive content given in itself. And since, “There also belongs to judgments of experience the cognition of agreement and connection,” we could very much end up being wrong in our attempts at identification. But it is the categories that tell us what it is that we affirm when we are in agreement about something, for instance when we decide on linguistic relativism, and not the other way around.

If there really is a matter of converting ‘real’ physical laws into rationally understood principles that only actually describe some secondary set of ‘forces’, this too necessarily will remain incomplete, as a supplement to Kant’s theory of the transcendental and not superseding it. The second world’s conditions of possibility are not from yet an always another third, but make up the very hole from which it bleeds back into the first. Along these lines Herder will admit that, “To be sure our philosophy must descend from the stars,” where it presently resides, partly from lofty ideals and partly from really being of everything and not just of an internal commitment, while in neither case serving the ends of man, so then, “to human beings.” Schopenhauer similarly concludes that, “Rather do we freely acknowledge that what remains after the entire abolition of will is for

²³Hegel, G., & Baillie, J. 443

²⁴Hegel, G. *Logic*. P. 98.

²⁵Kant, I., & Hatfield, G. 26.

²⁶Kant, I., & Hatfield, G. 59.

all those who are still full of will certainly nothing; but, conversely, to those in whom the will has turned and has denied itself, this our world, which is so real, with all its suns and milky-ways—is nothing.”²⁷ There is not a reasonable method for categorizing laws for us to begin from, as we are only that which we hope to eventually arrive at and as something other than ourselves whose laws will be unrecognizable to ourselves if they exist at all. But for now, there are both propositions and forces, despite however their borders may be roughly drawn.

With the advancing rate of computer growth, we come every day closer to making thinking machines that are indistinguishable from ourselves. Hegel says the part of consciousness we know as experience exists for-itself, but in its “work and enjoyment” there results necessarily another part that, “Belongs to the Unchangeable beyond and consists of faculties and powers,” which he disturbingly calls, “a gift from an alien source.”²⁸ We’ll set aside the distasteful problem of reliance on the labor of an Other, which is now become more ubiquitous than speculative as it was for Hegel. Wagenbaur describes a crucial shift that took place between Hegel and Kant: “Whereas the Enlightenment considers reason to be the nature of man, Hegel conceives nature to be reasonable. The reconciliation of mind and nature remains an achievement of reason, since nature is the self-alienated mind.”²⁹ What if we are able to recreate the structure of a relation to an Unchangeable beyond by intuiting it which eludes rational understanding but nonetheless as supreme favor to the thing, “Surrendered its embodied form”? Hegel in the *Logic* argues that, “Pure intuiting, moreover, is altogether the same as pure thinking.” Intuiting” and “believing” express initially the determinate representations that we associate with these words in our ordinary consciousness...³⁰ This dimension would be perfectly intuitable but evade the kind of rational inquiry that has resulted in our own disordered world.

Even with an affirmative answer to this speculative question, it could only first tentatively explain the creation of very microscopic possible worlds as simulations and not that immense one of our own. In a survey of the possibility for nonhuman ethics after Kant, Potter concludes that, “Within a Kantian scheme it may be reasonable to regard nonhuman paradigm animals as like passive citizens, though they may be somewhat more passive than even young children.”³¹ We defend entirely our duties to nonhuman paradigm animals so much as are we made to become aware of them by any means against the rest of the background environment, but for the very opposite reason that we should be so lucky were we to be considered as passive citizens ourselves in the grand order of things which far supersede human individuals in all cases. And this is also an a priori limit on the possibility of reason, rather than a merely empirical failing despite the obvious acceleration of discovery otherwise being carried out in the sciences.

²⁷Schopenhauer, A. P. 525.

²⁸Hegel, G., & Baillie, J. 125.

²⁹Wagenbaur, T. 371.

³⁰Hegel, G. *Logic*. P. 111.

³¹Potter, N. (n.d.). Kant on Duties to Animals. *Jahrbuch Für Recht Und Ethik*, 13, 309.

Whatever of the many things science will arrive at must be treated with the utmost care, and this in light of the history of nuclear armament driving much of the research in the 20th century. In a matter of hundreds of years' technology has improved beyond any of our wildest dreams, but we still have no means of seeing outside of our own world and very likely never will.

Were an apparent hard boundary to be crossed it would simply get redrawn somewhere further else. In a related discussion of our standard contradictory approach toward artificial intelligence, Žižek says that, "No wonder, then, that the specter of "artificial intelligence" appears as an entity which is simultaneously prohibited and considered *impossible*: we assert that it is not possible for a machine to think; at the same time, we try to prohibit research in these directions, on the grounds that it is dangerous, ethically dubious, etc."³² Were it really not possible there would presumably be no need to legislate against it at all, revealing a kind of technological hysteria at work. It is not a baseless panic though, as it does make for such a disturbing, precise simulation of that part of ourselves we had always assumed to be a free will – that very thing which eludes the mere forces of calculated possibility.

In the Reason section of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel explains that consciousness, "Experiences the double meaning implicit in what it did, viz. when it took hold of life and possessed it; but in doing so it really laid hold of death."³³ The negativity realized when the self-encompassing of life is done away with in symbolic death, or in revolutionary situations, is another one conditioned itself by the terms of the new situation and not just by those of the old. Hegel says of Spirit that, "It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself."³⁴ Both situations must be oriented toward their lack in the absolute in the sense that yet a third situation may be opened up to replace the previous structure of the one having merely followed the other. Žižek explains how thought cannot linger on this side for long, "The standard 'Hegelian' scheme of death (negativity) as the subordinate/mediating moment of Life can only be sustained if we remain within the category of Life whose dialectic is that of the self-mediating Substance returning to itself from its otherness."³⁵

Even though it consists in the moment of "encompassing synthesis" by means of being the absolutely pure form of "abstract negativity," it can only forever remain a threat while our attention is at the same time turned away toward almost anything else that falls under the entrancing category of Life. Schopenhauer says of the death of the individual by a dialectical relation between music and nature³⁶: "The inexhaustibleness of Possible melodies corresponds to the inexhaustibleness of Nature in difference of individuals, physiognomies, and courses of life. The transition from one key to an entirely different one, since

³²Slavoj, Ž. (1993). Tarrying with the negative: Kant, Hegel, and the critique of ideology (p. 43). Durham: Duke University Press.

³³Hegel, G., & Baillie, J. 220.

³⁴Hegel, G., & Baillie, J. 19.

³⁵Slavoj, Ž, & Bryant, L. 222.

³⁶Schopenhauer, Arthur. P 340.

it altogether breaks the connection with what went before, is like death, for the individual ends in it; but the will which appeared in this individual lives after him as before him, appearing in other individuals, whose consciousness, however, has no connection with his.” Because death revolves in such a way, he goes on to say it should alleviate one’s fear³⁷, “Life is, therefore, assured to the will to live; and so long as we are filled with the will live we need have no fear for our existence, even in the presence of death. It is true we see the individual come into being and pass away; but the individual is only phenomenal, exists only for the knowledge which is bound to the principle of sufficient reason.”

He seems to follow with Darwin in assaying the primacy of the species over the individual by the demands of nature when he says that³⁸, “this no more affects the will to live, of whose manifestation the individual is, as it were, only a particular example or specimen, than the death of an individual injures the whole of nature. For it is not the individual, but only the species that Nature cares for, and for the preservation of which she so earnestly strives,” He once again offers consolation however, by responding that³⁹, “Now, since man is Nature itself, and indeed Nature at the highest grade of its self-consciousness, but Nature is only the objectified will to live, the man who has comprehended and retained this point of view may well console himself, when contemplating his own death and that of his friends, by turning his eyes to the immortal life of Nature, which he himself is.” Finally, he says that that fear of death is compared to him thinking that⁴⁰, “The sun cries out at evening, “Woe is me! for I go down into eternal night.”

Snyder, a leading writer of the “Deep Ecology” movement, likely complains of academics exactly like myself when he complains that, “It’s a real pity that many in the humanities and social sciences are finding it so difficult to handle the rise of “nature” as an intellectually serious territory. For all the talk of “the other” in everybody’s theory these days, when confronted with a genuine Other, the non-human realm, the response of the come-lately anti-nature intellectuals is to circle the wagons and declare that nature is really a part of culture.”⁴¹ Our only contention would be that cultural constructions are equally void as natural ones. We believe Snyder advances a beautiful idea that betrays his theory all the same: “A Wilderness is always a specific place, because it is there for the local critters that live in it. In some cases a few humans will be living in it too. Such places are scarce and must be rigorously defended.”⁴² Wilderness is not general, it is not given unconditionally, and it is least of all as he otherwise attempts to explain in the very next line, “Resilient.” The wildernesses of the earth are currently under immense peril, and though they may survive human extinction, we are doing our best to bring them down with us.

³⁷Schopenhauer, Arthur. P. 355.

³⁸Schopenhauer, Arthur. P. 357.

³⁹Schopenhauer, Arthur. P. 357.

⁴⁰Schopenhauer, Arthur. P. 362

⁴¹Snyder, G. (n.d.). Is Nature Real? *Nature, Science, and Society*, (190), 197.

⁴²Snyder, G. 198.

We have investigated the connection between the positing of transcendental subjectivity and the sudden simultaneous appearance of ecological catastrophe. Our first confrontations with the sublime may have been categorized as a failed system through the steady work of science, even if this holds bad consequences for the encounter and specially accumulatively over time. For Kant, individual alienation may take place by means of the dynamical sublime erupting forth from all assumed states of tranquil nature. Hegel reveals a process taking place on the historical stage of selling one's labor on the market which disconnects it from the immediate use value that performing labor during the premodern era often could have provided for oneself and one's immediate neighbors.⁴³ There is also the possibility for an aesthetic encounter which does not negate all the features of science, nor fails to reflect the present historical conditions, but expands upon these coarse limitations.

The earliest aesthetic experiences were fleeting and not self-propagating but now through corroboration with science they hold the potential for being made to be so. From the scientific disposition aesthetic experiences can be made to be well-ordered through various types of categorization but in aesthetic experience those well-orderings can always each become dissolved back into the background of nature. An aesthetic disposition leaves one open to more kinds of encounters with the nonhuman than a merely scientific one. The two perspectives may co-exist so much as the scientific dimension is viewed as playing a solely non-human role – whereas scientists would often very much like to enter themselves into the picture. We should be very careful to differentiate the actual discipline of science from the popularization of it, which both includes much false information and is difficult to refute due to the nature of internet publishing. Allowing for alleged content creators nearly free access to push whatever narrative they please and with very little capacity for tiny comments at the bottom of a page to provide a convincing response. Both may encourage a clinical, self-distancing state in order to maximally notice differences. Aesthetic judgment reaches experiences of the beautiful and of the sublime procedurally but this can only be done through the slow process of historical development. Schopenhauer says of this moment that⁴⁴:

Here in the sphere of quiet deliberation, what completely possessed him and moved him intensely before, appears to him cold, colourless, and for the moment external to him; he is merely the spectator, the observer ... and quietly looks on at whatever may happen, even though it be the preparation for his own death (in the piece), but afterwards he again goes on the stage and acts and suffers as he must.

Were a god to exist, it would help us regardless of behavior. As one does not exist, nothing will come of it regarding our behavior. Our attitude toward it therefore should be one of complete, utter boredom. Schopenhauer warns

⁴³Hegel, G., & Baillie, J. 116.

⁴⁴Schopenhauer, Arthur. P129

against taking a more active stance on this issue:

... we see that almost all men who are secure from want and care, now that at last they have thrown off all other burdens, become a burden to themselves, and regard as a gain every hour they succeed in getting through; and thus every diminution of the very life which, till then, they have employed all their powers to maintain as long as possible. Ennui is by no means an evil to be lightly esteemed; in the end it depicts on the countenance real despair. It makes beings who love each other so little as men do, seek each other eagerly, and thus will become the source of social intercourse.

It is claimed by theists that it is essential that human action be related to god so that it can be made adequately justified. At the same time, however, it is always the case that action by reference to god is either adequately justified or never so and nonetheless takes place just the same. An attitude one might attempt to cultivate regarding this state of affairs would be a morose boredom, so that in the worst case one remains bored while on the off chance something exciting and not horrific may occur. Many people in the modern day show an exhausted apathy toward the topic of god, they don't much care which way the story goes so long as it gets decided for them by somebody else - say a self-acclaimed authority figure, and done very quickly on that accord.

If we are going to commit ourselves to science and operate on our own bodies in order to for live a long time because there is nothing detectably human-like outside of ourselves that would relieve of us of the sense of danger we face about being subsumed by nature, then we must grow accustomed to the feeling of boredom that follows from long periods on non-change. In the attempt to evade the mostly permanent human condition of boredom one drives oneself into madness because it cannot be avoided, and it will even cause those to go so far as to reach out to people they deeply dislike out of desperation for something they are hoping will be new again. The German Idealists are complicit in the degradation of nature so much as they happen to be living through it and commenting on it. Many of them express great praise for nature although they are also often critical of its common conceptions - namely that it exists outside of us without being structured in any way by human cognition. Atheism becomes important here because there is nothing in completion in the world outside of us for god to either have invented for us or be identified with. It is certainly true that an aesthetic stance then may make speculative discursive claims about the world but that it does not hold them in regard as in any way being determinate in a totalizing sense. Hegel argues that, "The good, the absolute good, fulfills itself eternally in the world, and the result is that it is already fulfilled in and for itself, and does not need to wait upon us for this to happen."⁴⁵ He calls this both an illusion and the hope on which all life resides.

⁴⁵Hegel, G. Logic. P. 286.