

Resisting the Divide

Part II (Betweenum in Prague)

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Abstracts

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Jeff Ogle (Regis University, Denver)

Emmanuel Levinas on Non-Conceptual Content

The notion of “metaphysical desire,” directed toward the Other as Other, that Levinas puts forward in *Totality and Infinity* is generally understood to supply us with grounds for criticism of earlier notions of intentionality or transcendence. However, the critical import of Levinas’s rich descriptions of the relation called “living from . . .” is not so well appreciated. Per Levinas, we “live from ‘good soup,’ air, light, spectacles, work, ideas, sleep, etc.” (TI, p. 110, my emphasis). Moreover, “to live” is actually a transitive verb, entailing that our lives have content (we are not normally conversant with bare existence). He also claims that 1) the contents we live from are not objects of representations (ibid.) and 2) their existence is not exhausted by the same “utilitarian schematism” that allows hammers to appear as hammers or doorknobs to appear as doorknobs. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger had concluded that these tools appear as what they are precisely in their use.

A double negation emerges here—namely, living from is not a relation that involves or entails representation, and it is not a mere instrumental relation—clearly directed against Husserl and Heidegger, respectively, and their notions of transcendence. Akin to the contemporary notion of nonconceptual mental content, Levinas is claiming that the contents of living from do not appear because of any larger network of meaning to which they belong. Rather, they appear to us directly and affectively because of our enjoyment of them. Contra Husserlian intentionality, the contents of living from are not measured against a noema so that they only exist for us as such-and-such when the noema we project onto them is found to be adequate to our ongoing experience of them. These contents appear “prior to” (logically, anyway) our conceptual schemes, relating us to, anchoring us in, the surrounding world. Contra Heideggerian being-in-the-world, the contents of living-from do not need to be situated within a network of in-order-to relations to appear. Because we enjoy these contents, they have intrinsic value, but they do not reveal a mode of being for ourselves, an existential possibility that we might take up. They are ephemera, anchoring us to the present more than they enable us to project a particular future.

If Husserlian and existential phenomenology exhaust our accounts of meaning, the first involving noematically projected expectations and the second involving a set of relations that make up the worldhood of a world, then the contents of living from are meaningless. Yet they appear. This calls into question what seems to be a basic tenet of both strands of phenomenology, namely the equation that being = what appears = what some kind of meaningful framework enables the appearance of. That the contents of living from connect us to the world affectively, without any conceptual schema being involved, reveals a similarity to what is now called nonconceptual content. This connection, part of Levinas’s lesser-known attack on the primacy of intentionality in our relating to the world, merits further investigation.

Dena Shottenkirk (Brooklyn College, CUNY, New York)

Mournful Angels

What makes a good line? This debate has been renewed with the role of AI in artmaking. I approach the issue through the lens of the epistemological role of art and investigate whether the addition of AI agents furthers these epistemic functions. Comparing the frameworks of analytic philosophy to continental philosophy, I extend those frameworks to analyze approaches that emphasize particularities in perception and vision science contrasted with those that emphasize an embodied or phenomenological approach. I then use the overlap in these two approaches to develop my perceptual analysis of art, which I call gistIP (intelligent perception). Considering the epistemological role of art and its function in consensus-making, I argue that AI agents, at least at this point, do not further the ends of artmaking.

Tomáš Musil (Charles University, Prague)

Beyond Tool or Replacement: AI as a Partner in Artmaking

This paper shows how AI’s role in art can bridge the analytic-continental divide through a Hegelian lens. We argue that AI and human artists stand in a relation of *Anerkennung* (recognition), achieving fuller artistic realization through mutual engagement.

Drawing on Hegel's master-slave dialectic and aesthetics, we propose that AI operates at the level of Hegelian Understanding (Verstand)—capable of pattern recognition, conceptual categorization, and linguistic generation, yet without the self-consciousness of full human consciousness. From inferentialist and ordinary-language perspectives, understanding is mastery of rule-governed practices rather than inner states. AI shows this by navigating inferential relationships in artistic contexts—grasping what follows in creative discourse without conscious access to semantic content. On Dennett's intentional stance, attributing understanding to AI is warranted when it predicts contextually appropriate creative behavior. Far from a limitation, AI's lack of self-consciousness is the source of its unique artistic contribution. Its systematic Understanding complements human dialectical consciousness, enabling collaborations neither could achieve alone. As Hegel notes, consciousness develops through encounter with otherness; human artists gain new creative possibilities through dialogue with AI's alien yet conceptually sophisticated perspective.

This Hegelian framework serves both analytic and continental traditions. For analytic philosophers, we show how AI's computational processes can be understood as aesthetic cognition—pattern recognition, salience mapping, and affordance detection that perform similar functions to human perceptual mechanisms. Drawing on pragmatist insights, we demonstrate how focusing on the collaborative process itself dissolves traditional worries about AI consciousness. For continental philosophers, we argue that AI offers a new form of phenomenological experience: a distinct mode of being-in-language that generates novel artistic insights.

Rather than the modernist narrative of stylistic revolution or postmodernist fragmentation, we propose understanding AI-human artistic collaboration through Hegelian Sittlichkeit—ethical life lived in community. AI becomes not a tool but a participant in the community of artistic practice, where human embodied experience and AI's linguistic intelligence create artworks neither could produce alone.

This approach resolves the analytic-continental divide and the theory-practice gap by showing how AI art practices require both rigorous analytical assessment of

computational capabilities and phenomenological attention to the lived experience of human-AI collaboration. We conclude by examining specific case studies of AI-human artistic partnerships that exemplify this dialectical relationship, demonstrating how the question of replacement dissolves into a richer understanding of artistic co-creation.

Rudolf Rosa (Charles University, Prague)

Production and perception in AI art: Bridging the theory-practice divide based on technological insights and practical observations

Artificial intelligence is gradually paving its way through the field of art, already holding a strong position among many amateurs and occasionally sprouting also in works of professionals. As computer science experts, through our extensive collaborations with artists and theorists exploring AI co-creation of literary works, we have observed their usual practices and questions, as well as common technological misconceptions. In our talk, we will present our practical and technological insights and suggest their connections to theoretical views of the creative process, especially focusing on the author and reader. Our observations in turn have practical implications for the practice of employing AI systems in the creative process, suggesting that perception skills of the involved humans typically seem to be more important than production skills.

Specifically, we note that:

- (a) Generative models are trained to produce work for the human eye, not for a machine.
- (b) Autoregressive generative models iterate over reading the output created so far, proposing multiple options for the next step (e.g. next word), and selecting the next step to take. We can view them as internally applying a latent model of the human perceiver to do that.
- (c) Many successful human-AI co-generated works use human judgement in the editing/curation/publishing. Human involvement seems less crucial in the preceding ideation and content creation phases.

However, other approaches can also be successful, e.g. reversing the roles by using the AI model to judge and edit human-written content. In general, human involvement seems important in at least some of the phases, but any phase can be automated.

Based on our observations, we suggest the following:

- (a) Current generative models seem to closely match Barthes' definition of a scriptor.
- (b) Conceptualizing production as iterative perception and interpretation (by an actual or simulated human) followed by a next production step seems to be a useful unifying view applicable to human and/or machine production; even though there are unsolved issues such as hidden internal states/thoughts or conflicting neuroscientific discoveries.
- (c) To require a pre-existing human idea/intent prior to starting the generation process seems harder to defend. This does not concern an idea/intent developed throughout the process (which again supports the perception-centered view).
- (d) It seems more productive to focus on publishership rather than authorship in co-generated works.

Emily Lemmon (University of Iowa)

Perspectival Knowledge and the Epistemic Value of Literature: A Murdochian Approach

Philosophy of literature is a subfield in aesthetics that has garnered renewed interest after Gregory Currie's recent book attacking literary cognitivism, a position for which he was once a primary proponent. Literary cognitivism is the view that readers can gain knowledge by reading fictional literature, despite fictional literature not fitting within the usual parameters for what is necessary for knowledge to be acquired.

My paper is a defense of a particular kind of literary cognitivism, called perspectivalism. Perspectivalism is the view that knowledge can be gained from reading

fictional literature, and the kind of knowledge to be gained is non-propositional, amounting to a shift in perspective that allows people to enlarge their concepts in order to view the world more accurately. While perspectivalism has been an existing position within literary cognitivism for some time, it is the least defined and supported position in the field. However, with further development, it has the potential to explain the impact of reading fictional literature and to offer a position that corrects flaws committed by other views within the debate.

A strengthening of perspectivalism will be conducted, perhaps surprisingly, through an interpretation of a collection of Iris Murdoch's essays in *Existentialists and Mystics*. While Murdoch's philosophy has typically been read in the context of moral philosophy, a treatment of her work under the philosophy of literature lens can show that a perspectival position emerges from her writing that is stronger than the existing formulations. Murdoch's picture of perspectivalism involves a continual reformation of one's own viewpoint through reading literature that inspires both a deeper social awareness and a conceptual sensitivity to nuance and difference.

Importantly, Murdoch herself is a philosopher who resisted the divide between analytic and continental traditions, drawing from existentialist and phenomenological schools of thought as well as the linguistic and epistemological concerns of analytic philosophy. Her work serves not only as a resource for revitalizing perspectivalism, but also as an example of how philosophical inquiry into literature can transcend inherited disciplinary boundaries.

By developing a Murdochian perspectivalism, this paper addresses "What is the epistemological function of art?" by showing how literature can serve as a unique source of social and conceptual knowledge that resists reduction to propositional content, while still playing a meaningful epistemic role.

Jesús Navarro (University of Seville)

The Epistemic Aims of Arts and Literature

In previous work, I have explored how the so-called analytic–continental divide in philosophy affects our accounts of meaning, interpretation, and language use. This talk extends that line of inquiry to the epistemic potential of the arts, with special attention to literature. While continental traditions—exemplified by Gadamer and the hermeneutical school—have long examined the cognitive dimension of artistic creation and reception, analytic epistemology has been more reluctant to accommodate such claims. From an analytic standpoint, the arts often seem epistemically suspect: they involve fictional discourse, the suspension of truth attributions, and a willingful disregard for factual accuracy. If epistemic goods are typically conceived in terms of truth and epistemic justification, how can practices rooted in make-believe and imagination yield anything epistemically valuable at all?

This paper examines whether the virtues cultivated by artists and audiences—creativity, sensitivity, interpretive openness—can be understood as epistemic virtues, either in a responsibilist sense (linked to intellectual character) or a reliabilist one (linked to truth-conducive processes). I argue that the epistemic value of the arts can be vindicated, but only if we distinguish between two epistemic aims: knowledge and understanding. Knowledge, in its strict epistemological sense, remains tethered to truth and the facts, and thus encounters structural limitations in the context of fictional or non-truth-oriented practices. Understanding, by contrast, is an epistemic goal more flexibly related to truth and can thrive in contexts where sense-making and sense-grasping take precedence over factual correspondence.

I will elaborate an account of understanding that foregrounds these two components: sense-making, the active construction of coherent deeds or performances; and sense-grasping, the ability to apprehend and identify meanings within such frameworks—according to a distinction I have recently elaborated elsewhere. Artistic and literary engagement, precisely because it brackets truth claims, allows for the exploration of possible meanings and perspectives in ways that enrich our capacity for understanding. In this light, aesthetic aims—such as formal innovation,

capacity for understanding. In this light, aesthetic aims—such as formal innovation, expressive depth, and imaginative resonance—can coalesce with epistemic aims when the goal is to deepen our grasp of human experience, conceptual possibilities, or moral complexity.

Finally, the paper aims showing that art and creativity are not peripheral to the epistemic quest but substantial to it. By re-centring understanding as a legitimate and distinctive epistemic aim, we can account for the cognitive contribution of the arts without distorting their aesthetic nature or forcing them into a narrowly truth-oriented model.

Petr Koťátko (Institute of Philosophy, CAS, Prague)

Fictional facts and worlds from continental and analytic perspective

The paper confronts two accounts of the constitution of fictional worlds of narrative fiction: (1) the “analytic” approach, continuing in Fregean tradition, based on the account of facts as true propositions (“Gedanken”), and replacing truthfulness by “authentification”; (2) the “phenomenological” approach, inspired by Husserl’s account of facts as judgements filled with evidence (“erfüllte Urteile”) and replacing evidence by images. The paper focuses on the latter approach, as represented by Felix Martínez-Bonati and his systematic application of Husserl’s notion of “Erfüllung” to literary fiction. In confrontation with Bonati, the author extends the concept of “fulfillment” (or “saturation”) so as to include, besides visual images of situations and events specified in propositions expressed, also emotional and moral responses to them, spontaneous simulations of motoric and other bodily experiences triggered by them, the experience of a continuous flow of narration, or of its stuckings and collapses (functioning e.g. as a performative representation of the chaotic nature of the world), the experience of the text’s compatibility with or resistance to our interpretive routine, conceptual equipment, schemes of imagination, elementary intuitions, etc. Clearly, the sources of these experiences are not just the expressed propositions, but all parameters of the narrative devices used. Finally, the author rejects Bonati’s interpretation of fulfillment as “alienation” (or “dissolution”) of meanings in images. Among other things, he argues that this would

eliminate the communicative framework within which the interpretation of a text of narrative fiction takes place.

Despite the criticism, the author appreciates Bonati's work in this field as an example of fruitful combination, rather than confrontation, of continental and analytic methods and inspirations.

Cezary Woźniak (Jagellonian University, Cracow)

Art or Not? A classificatory account

It has become increasingly common to casually and unreflectively refer to things as "a work of art." But beyond looseness in language lies a deeper habit: our tendency to equate anything that brings aesthetic pleasure with art. This is a mistake. A perfect matcha latte or a well-styled pair of New Balance may offer aesthetic satisfaction—but none of them, for that reason alone, qualifies as art.

However, once we acknowledge that distinction, we're inevitably pushed toward the more difficult task of offering a proper account of what actually counts as art. At a time when "aesthetically pleasing" is a sought-after tag, when conceptual art is often met with ridicule, and when new formats such as culinary experiences arise, we seem more uncertain than ever about what should or shouldn't be included in the category of art. Overcoming this uncertainty is precisely what this paper aims to do.

I present a set of four necessary and sufficient conditions—Intentional Composition, Form of Presentation, Sensory Stimulation, and Intellectual Engagement—that can be used (by anyone, i.e., no expertise required) to test both general practices and individual works to determine whether they belong to the realm of art.

To demonstrate how the theory works, I've chosen food as the subject of analysis, for two reasons: because the philosophical terrain surrounding food as art remains relatively underexplored, and because it shows how the proposed framework is open to new formats of artistic practice and not restricted to traditionally recognised forms.

Overall, I provide a brief review of earlier classificatory accounts of art, highlighting both their overlap with my theory and the shortcomings I aim to address. I then introduce avant-garde cuisine or fine dining as a timely test case. Once that's done, I present the theory: four conditions for something to be considered art, applied to three examples to demonstrate how the framework works. Of course, I acknowledge some potential criticisms, e.g., the requirement of material embodiment, and more pressingly, the exclusion of relevant works that are already believed to be art.

This proposal is deliberately non-technical and accessible: a tool to restore some clarity—or at least a sharper debate—about a question critics and philosophers face daily yet often sidestep for fear of subjectivism: what counts as art? It also fits "resisting the divide." The project combines analytical and continental philosophy, along with first-person experiences, and speaks directly to practice across various media.

Jana Ndiaye Beránková (Institute of Philosophy, CAS, Prague)

Between image, text, and concept: the many theoretical practices of Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas

In the 1970s and 1980s, architectural drawings often acted as vectors of theoretical thinking. Peter Eisenman's House I (1967–1968) and House II (1968–1969), Diana Agrest, Mario Gandelsonas, Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti's project for the Roosevelt Island (1974) or Aldo Rossi's drawings of the San Cataldo Cemetery in Modena (1971–1976) were not only outlines for real buildings but also visual diagrams of their theories, thus also serving as interface or a space of in-betweenness between practice and theory – theory, which at the time, was heavily influenced by concepts of French structuralism and semiotics. In the 1970s, architects also began to frequently question and blur the limits between art and architectural representation by making drawings that had an "autonomous" aesthetic value and presented themselves as more than tools for construction. Architectural representation began to intersect with contemporary art; museums and private collectors started to buy drawings and models. In 1977, Leo Castelli gallery

in New York presented architectural drawings in the exhibition “Architecture I,” which was then followed by “Architecture II: Houses for Sale” (1980) and by “Architecture III: Follies” (1983). By becoming a tool of theory, architectural drawings gained in autonomy and in freedom of imagination. Paradoxically, their loss of use value as prescriptions for building was accompanied by their gain in exchange value; they became commodities on the art market.

In this paper, I question the spaces of in-betweenness of architectural representation, theory, and philosophy (i.e. structuralism and semiotics). More specifically, I discuss the process of “autonomization of architectural drawings” by proposing a case study of the relationship between image and text in the work of Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas. The project for the 1974 Roosevelt Island competition by Agrest, Gandelsonas, Machado, and Silveti alludes to Roland Barthes’s and Julia Kristeva’s notions of text as a polysemous entity and can be seen as an example of what Agrest and Gandelsonas described as “theoretical practice.” By using this specific case-study, I question the divides between image, text, and concept in architecture, thus showing the instrumental role of philosophical thinking in the genealogy of a post-1968 field of investigation that came to be later understood and codified as “theory of architecture.”

Joff Bradley (Teikyo University, Tokyo)

On the arrogance of the philosopher who speaks in front of the photograph (JSPS : 二国間交流事業)

By rethinking the autonomy of photography, I challenge the assumption that philosophers speak best for painters, and indeed that painters speak best for photographers. Drawing on Deleuze, but also Laruelle’s non-philosophy, I argue that photography has its own determinacy and non-philosophical agenda. My contribution is to name a “double glitch” which emerges through mobile phone technology and digital algorithms, which reveals both the painter’s reliance on photography and photography’s capacity to disclose its own reconfiguration. Where Deleuze, through Bacon, locates the Figure in painting, I suggest that photography itself already manipulates perception of the real, and brings to light what was always there yet unseen,

perception of the real, and brings to light what was always there yet unseen, namely movement as such. Photography marks a technology of the Figure and becomes a site where technology and the unconscious intersect. Unlike the painter’s dependence on the photographic image, digital photography, through manipulation, post-production, and techniques, transforms our perception of time, space, and movement. Photography reveals microscopic worlds and infinite spaces beyond the human eye, even suggesting possibilities of multi-dimensional Figure. In this sense, contemporary photography is not only Deleuzian but also Bergsonian: it discloses matter in motion, duration and continuity. But I shall undermine my own argument in this respect by concluding that digital photography should be thought not as subordinate to philosophy or painting but as its own mode of truth. Through the technology of digital photography which is opened up is access to the improbability of the Figure behind the figuration of the analogue. Photography both is real and gets to the real. It does not need philosophy for this.

Šárka Lojdová (Charles University, Prague)

Wakeful Dream about (Aesthetic) Experience – On the Experiential Dimension of Arthur C. Danto’s Definition of Art

In this paper, I focus on the thoughts of Arthur Coleman Danto, one of the chief architects of the analytical philosophy of art and aesthetics, and approach them through the lens of the analytical-continental philosophy divide. In accordance with the pure analytical philosophy of art, Danto disapproved of the notion of aesthetic experience, mocked the very idea of an aesthetic attitude, and even accused aesthetics of disenfranchising art and neutralizing its power. These ideas are scattered throughout Danto’s texts, including his seminal book *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (1981). At the same time, and in line with the core principles of analytical philosophy, Danto aimed to reveal the essence of art and put forward a definition consisting of necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. In *After the End of Art* (1997), he introduced the definition of embodied meanings, claiming that art has to be about something and embody its meaning. However, in his last monograph, *What Art Is* (2013), he added a necessary condition of wakeful dreams that

captures the skill of the artist and the universality of art. In my presentation, I first argue that the condition of wakeful dreams directly links Danto's definition with what I call an experiential dimension in Danto's definition of art. The experiential dimension encompasses the emotions elicited when engaging with artworks. I demonstrate that this dimension was always present in Danto's definition of art, but that it comes fully to the fore with his condition of wakeful dreams. Second, I argue that Danto's scepticism regarding aesthetic experience paradoxically stems from his adherence to the fact that art elicits emotional responses in the audience. I demonstrate that emotions evoked by art matter to Danto, and that these emotions are sometimes so strong that they can motivate us to reconsider views we held in our private lives. My reading of Danto emphasizing the role of (aesthetic) experience might thus be considered continental. The strengths and weaknesses of Danto's "emotional cognitivism" will be illustrated through selected artworks of Yoko Ono, displayed in both of her retrospective exhibitions in Berlin: *Dream Together* and *Music of the Mind*. Specifically, I offer a Dantoesque interpretation of Ono's participatory pieces, *Wish Tree* (1996/2025) and *Cleaning Piece* (1996/2025).

Martin Nitsche – Nataša Hand (Institute of Philosophy, CAS, Prague)

Distance and Proximity in the Continental Philosophy of Art

In the powerful installation titled *Lament of the Images* (2018), Alfredo Jaar conjures up an intricate study of distance and proximity—a choreography of light and shadow through which vision itself becomes a living, shifting act. The following discussion shall build upon and develop these concepts presented within the artwork and situate them within the field of continental philosophy and shall propose how the dialogue of philosophical and artistic thought can be not only mutually constitutive, but vitally important. Jaar's installation unfolds a poetics of visibility grounded in movement, a space where seeing turns into becoming. Within its quiet intensity, the work opens an affective realm woven from the fragile tensions between revelation and concealment, illumination and obscurity.

The present analysis traces that delicate encounter, where presence and absence dissolve into one another, transforming the horizon of perception into a field of touch and feeling. The discussion stemming from the study of this artwork opens up a reading of the installation as a site of resonance – of bodies sensing, remembering, and reaching – creating a temporality within which binaries of light and dark, loss and union, unravel. In this magnetic space of longing and distance, the viewer, drawn into its slow unfolding, is subtly, irrevocably changed.

The following reflection shall build upon the thought of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in order to explore how *Lament of the Images* can be experienced as a living encounter, a phenomenological event and as such as an inspiration for the phenomenological theory of art. Such a reading through and with these philosophical perspectives together opens an analysis in which the installation becomes not merely an object of contemplation, but a phenomenological unfolding — a space where consciousness, body, and world converge in the shifting play of visibility and withdrawal.



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