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Bruno Bauer's critical theory of art and Hegel's Lectures on Aesthetics in 1828-29

Abstract

The aim of my paper is to show to what extent Bruno Bauer's first writing and his critical theory of art are indebted to Hegel's last lectures on the aesthetics or the philosophy of art, which Bauer attended in 1828-29. First, I will deal with Bauer's concept of myth (§ 1). To consider his concept of myth allows us to understand Bauer's rhetorical strategy in the Young Hegelian movement. In a second step (§ 2), I will give an account of Bauer's critical theory of art. Next, I will show (§ 3) how the prelude to his account of art was already present in his first writing, the dissertation On the principles of the beautiful, written in 1829. In the last part of my contribution (§ 4), I will take into account Hegel's final lectures on aesthetics (1828-29), aiming at showing its significance for Bauer's early reflections.

Keywords

Hegel's aesthetics, Young Hegelian aesthetics, Bruno Bauer

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1. *The myths of Bauer*

The day after Hegel's death in Berlin, in November 1831, an ironic adagio started to circulate among his students. The philosopher was to have declared on his deathbed: "none of my scholars understood me, except one, and he misunderstood me" (*my transl.*). Several authors diffused that motto: the Young German H. Laube, the fathers of historical materialism, Fr. Engels and K. Marx (see Marx, Engels 1972: II, 186; Marx, Engels 1998: I/3, 256-64; Duichin 1989: fn. 55), and the Young Hegelian B. Bauer (1842b [1986]: 437). In a writing titled *Die Mythen von Hegel* (*The Myths of Hegel*) and published anonymously in 1842 in the *Rheinische Zeitung*, the journal edited by Marx, Bauer attacks the Old Hegelians, to whom the abovementioned "myth" is ironically referred. With this rhetorical trick, he criticizes them, because they represent the accomplishment of Hegel's prophecy expressed in the deathbed sentence, since they were unable to interpret the esoteric meaning of his philosophy, understanding him merely at a literal level. Nevertheless, it is difficult to establish if Bauer is referring or not to other actors of the Young Hegelian movement, when he speaks about the inability to grasp the real core of his master's teaching. Even if he recognizes that "Hegel trusted the scholars who look forward" (*Ibid.*; *my transl.*), he does not mention explicitly that Hegel would have been sympathetic to the Young Hegelians. The use of the term "myths" (*Mythen*) in the plural form reveals – as I want to demonstrate in this paragraph – the dissimulative rhetorical strategy adopted by Bauer and, hence, what could be defined as, borrowing a term from Tomba (2002), a "polemological" conception of myth: Bauer turns the "myth", meant as fact narrated, into the myths, i.e. the different narratives based on a fictional "state of affairs". Bauer is indeed aware that the deathbed motto could be used by both parties, the Old and the Young ones.

However, to intersect the polemological level of his concept of myth, developed in his critique of the Holy Scriptures and in political writings, one has to consider at least two domains of his thought from an aesthetic viewpoint: the historical and the religious. In the first case, Bauer already expressed in his idea of the "objective historiography" (*objektive Historiographie*), that the historical fact does not constitute the starting point of the historian, but is the result of his labour (*Arbeit*); there is no positivity of the historical fact (see Tomba 2002: 81-4), which is intrinsically and essentially embedded in a political background, since it is dissolved in the different narrations. In the second case, his critique of the gospels is more radical than his predecessors D.Fr. Strauss and C.H. Weisse. The distinc-

tive trait of Bauer's critique consists in detecting an aesthetic production, Mark's gospel, at the origin of the myth of Jesus. To consider Strauss's and Weiße's stance on the gospels allows us to put Bauer's critique under a brighter light. Strauss, in *The Life of Jesus (Das Leben Jesu)*, criticized the gospels, developing a theory on the basis of which the myth of Jesus originated from the oral tradition of the society, the "universal individual" (*allgemeines Individuum*) (Strauss 1838: § 14)¹. The society unconsciously produced a legend or a myth, which was verbally disseminated; therefore, assuming "external" narrative elements. The gospel as literary production, according to Strauss, stops the growth of the legend (*Wachstum der Sage*) that is orally disseminated. For Strauss, the tradition lives in the orality of a community. By speaking, the speakers unconsciously add to the fact, which they supposedly experienced, narrated fictitious elements. Here Strauss adopts the metaphor of the growth of the snowball: passing from mouth to mouth and being subject to the oral refinements, the history narrated by the speakers grew and grew as a snowball. The narration is therefore orally modified until someone gives to it a written form. The stop of the growth of the legend does not mean however that the oral transmission is permanently stopped, it means instead that it assumes the form of a "record" of the legend at a certain moment. In other words, Strauss means that the gospels are the written expression of the oral legend of the community. Accordingly, the more one gospel has aesthetic refinements and narrative fictions, the greater is its distance from the original legend. For this reason, according to Strauss, Mark's Gospel chronologically followed the gospels of Matthew and Luke, which were taken to be more coherent with the oral tradition, whereas Mark's was full of imaginative narratives. In other words, the aesthetic refinement of Mark's gospel was a re-elaborated version of the other two gospels. Ch.H. Weiße, on the other hand, in *Die evangelische Geschichte kritisch und philosophisch bearbeitet* (1838) defended the idea that the first gospel was that of Mark, precisely *because of the aesthetic elements*. According to Weiße, the aesthetic moment is necessary for each religion and each religion manifests itself through a poetic phenomenon. In other words, Weiße turned the idea of Strauss upside down. To affirm that Mark's gospel chronologically preceded Luke's and Matthew's means to affirm the priority of the literary over the oral form.

¹ In the edition of *Das Leben Jesu* of 1835, this passage is within the § 12. I will not take into account the different editions of Strauss's writing.

The Marcan hypothesis, *id est* the chronological priority of Mark, was shared by Bauer, who did not accept it uncritically, but rather polemically radicalized it. In the chapter entitled the *mythische Erklärung der heiligen Geschichte* (*the Mythical Explanation of the Holy Scriptures*) in *Hegels Lehre von Religion und Kunst von dem Standpunkt des Glaubens aus beurteilt* (*Hegel's Doctrine of Religion and Art*) (1842), Bauer distanced himself from both Strauss and Weiße. The *Traditionshypothese* of the former implies, according to Bauer, the impossibility of finding a real origin for the Christian community. Strauss, by affirming that the tradition was an unconscious and intersubjective process, does not explain what has to be explained: namely the origin, the point of departure of the mythical narratives of that community. Bauer explicitly rejects this idea based on the *regressus in infinitum* of the tradition and considers the literary creation of the Evangelists to be essential: "Die Tradition hat nicht Hände zu schreiben", "the tradition has not hands to write" (Bauer 1841a: 71; *my transl.*). Tradition, indeed, according to Bauer, can be considered exclusively from the perspective of the gospels, in other words retrospectively. Instead of Weiße, who correlated the aesthetic properties of Mark's gospel to the Christian religion, Bauer did not recognize the religious moment, considering the gospels *exclusively* as aesthetic productions. In the chapter of the *Hegels Lehre* mentioned before, indeed, Bauer developed a critique of Weiße's concept of myth by discussing his article *Über den Begriff des Mythos und seine Anwendung auf die neutestamentliche Geschichte*, which appeared in the I. Fichte's *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie* between 1839 and 1840. In this article Weiße argued that the myth is intrinsically a religious phenomenon that manifests itself as a work of art. If the myth represents the religious revelation, the work of art is the sensuous manner in which such religious revelation is given. The myth, according to Weiße, is what remains of the living activity of the phantasy (*lebendige Phantasietätigkeit*) of the ancient people, which expresses through poetry, the "aesthetic organ": "We have the explicit opinion, that also the symbolic view can absolutely find its true terrain only under the premise of the poetical nature and the origin of the myth" (Weiße 1839: 232; *my transl.*). Even if Weiße accepted the validity of the gospels' narrations, he refused Strauss's idea of an unconscious origin of the myth. In *Über das Studium des Homer und seine Bedeutung für unser Zeitalter* (1826), Weiße had criticized the philologists F.A. Wolf and his scholar K.O. Müller, who coined the "tradition hypothesis" to explain why, in their opinion, Homeric epics has its origin in a poetical oral tradition. Weiße defended the opposite position, arguing that just one

poet had elaborated a significant part of Homer's writings (see Williamson 2004: 167-71). On the basis of these premises, hence, it can be comprehended why Mark's gospel was considered by Weiße to be the first Synoptic: it was the most refined of the three Synoptics, and, hence, the nearest to the religious revelation.

Nevertheless, Weiße's Marcan hypothesis does not fully recognize the role of a self-conscious subjectivity in the production of the myth as a work of art. Even if Weiße recognized that the first gospel was Mark's, he conceived the myth still as a matter of taking up a given material, rather than a free, subjective creation. In his conception, Weiße remained anchored to positivity, considering the gospels as a reliable source. Against this view Bauer writes: "Weiße [...] does not want to admit, that Hegel is right when he situates the myth within the 'rubric of art', he [...] [Weiße – G.S.] wants to deny the hypothesis of a *free creation of the myths through art* [*die Hypothese von einer freien Schöpfung der Mythen durch die Kunst*]" (Bauer 1842a: 195).

Albert Schweitzer admirably formulated the real core of Bauer's conception:

The Marcan hypothesis, accordingly, now takes on the following form. Our knowledge of the Gospel history does not rest upon any basis of tradition, but only upon three literary works. Two of these are not independent, being merely expansions of the first [...]. Consequently there is no tradition of the Gospel history, but only a single literary source. (Schweitzer 1910: 142-3)

Bauer's conception does not refuse entirely Strauss's idea that the gospels were a product of the intersubjective oral exchange of a community. He accepts what can be termed the "transcendental" side of Strauss's conception: according to Bauer, the society, the *allgemeines Individuum*, gives the condition of possibility, on the basis of which the evangelists can freely create their own story and exert their subjectivity. Nevertheless, Strauss was unable to recognize the real role of the subjectivity involved in this process. According to Bauer, the evangelists cannot be conceived as mere "recorder" of the legends. Conceiving them in this way means to consider just one side, the side of the substance, missing the power of subjectivity. Only a self-conscious individual, even if as an expression of a community, can produce art and compose poetry (Bauer 1842a: 204; see also Moggach 2003: 73). If art, for Bauer, is an expression of the universal self-consciousness, it means that the myth can only be a self-conscious creation. For this reason, the gospels are, therefore, a voluntary creation

of the evangelists, which established the collective myth of the Christian community.

From this perspective, the myth is not intended as something religious by Bauer, but as something aesthetic, structured on the conscious narrative of communities and individuals. In order to grasp Bauer's radical idea, we can call to mind Furio Jesi's reflections of the distinction between the "myth" and the "mythological machine" (*macchina mitologica*) (Jesi 1979: 111-3). The first one is like a "void", something whose essence is not "verifiable", an absence (*ibid.*). "Myth" is intended as a sort of absent object of the fictitious narrative and, hence, the openness of that narrative. Instead, the "mythologic machine" produces mythologies *unconsciously*, the stories on this absent object. But Bauer is, in a certain sense, more "radical" than Jesi, because he affirms that, at least at a certain level of the social and cultural polemology, there is no machine at work without self-consciousness. Each myth is a work of art and, in this sense, a product of the *self-consciousness*.

For this reason, it seems to me that it is possible to conclude that Bauer is interpreting his own practice as a mythical and, therefore, artistic intervention in the Young Hegelian's struggles. Not only in the brief article on *The Myths of Hegel*, but also in *Hegels Lehre* and in the well-known *Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel den Atheisten und Antichristen. Ein Ultimatum* (*The Trumpet of the Last Judgement against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist. An Ultimatum*), Bauer uses Hegel's citations as a "literary montage", not quoting the entire citations, but rather modifying them or simply putting them in a different order. For this reason, each discourse on the correctness of Bauer's reference to Hegel is in a certain sense doomed to fail and additionally means missing or misunderstanding this rhetorical – and aesthetic, as I shall demonstrate – level evident in Bauer's texts.

2. *Bauer's critical theory of art*

In his writings of the *Vormärz*, Bauer develops a critical theory of art in the twofold sense of the subjective and objective function of the genitive case. In the first case, it is art itself that performs a critical task, when it takes part to the struggles of history; in the second, instead, Bauer aims at criticizing all the forms of alienated art and in particular what he calls "religious art" (*religiöse Kunst*). Bauer's critical theory of art can be broken down by discussing two of his own related conceptions: the *dissolu-*

tion of religion in art (Auflösung der Religion in der Kunst) and the critique of the principle of exclusion (*Ausschließlichkeit*).

Hegels Lehre is the text in which his conception of the *dissolution of religion in art* can be found. Against the Berlin theologians, Bauer acknowledges Hegel's idea of the *Vergangenheitscharakter der Kunst ihrer höchsten Möglichkeit nach*, usually known as the End of Art Thesis, accepting the idea of the detachment of art from religion in modernity. The secularization of art is indeed a crucial element of Hegel's "multifarious dissolutions" (*vielfältige Auflösungen*) (Iannelli 2015: 19) of art. Nevertheless, Bauer does not see this process as already achieved in modernity. Art is not yet absolutely free. It has to free itself from the religious constraints of the Christian State, personified by the Prussian monarch Friedrich Wilhelm IV and from other constraints that do not conform to the power of self-consciousness. Art, for Bauer, can be free only if it is not subjugated by heteronomous forces such as religion, which represents particularity or exclusiveness (*Ausschließlichkeit*). All the same, the criticism of Bauer does not concern only the religious level. As soon as art becomes autonomous from its religious origins and constraints, it is no more bounded to "theological pragmatism" – in Bauer's own terms – namely the exploitation of art as means, as weapon (*Waffe*), to reach external ends. In this polemological interregnum, art becomes political. Therefore, Bauer's conception is neither a defense of *art for art's sake* nor an irenic or conciliatory theory of art. Rather, Bauer finds the politicization of art in the power of art itself to become autonomous from any external force, in its capacity to free itself. For this reason, art is conceived by Bauer as a coalescence of the universal self-consciousness and its struggles. His conception therefore is a defense of Hegel's end of art thesis and simultaneously its radicalization in a theory of the future of art².

Furthermore, it has to be noted that Bauer's notion of art is very far from a mimetic conception, if one means by *mimesis* the mere artistic redoubling of a given truth or reality³. Probably this is also one of the reasons why Bauer's favorite writer was K.Ph. Moritz (see Barnikol 1972: 447; Breckman 2013: 44-5), one of the first critics of the principle of imitation (see D'Angelo 1997: 96). Instead of a mimetic theory of art, Bauer em-

² I permit myself to mention that I have discussed this issue in Schimmenti 2018.

³ I am well aware that different concepts of *mimesis* have been advanced in the history of philosophy and aesthetics. My aim here is not obviously to take the entirety of the philosophical positions on this regard into account, but instead to highlight that the common point of all mimetic theories lies in the idea that art consists in a form of relation to a pre-existing reality or truth (see D'Angelo 1997: 93-4).

braces an aesthetics of productivity⁴: art forges truth. Nevertheless, if Bauer accepts one of the distinguishing features introduced by the aesthetics of Romanticism (see Frank 1989: 9-14; 24; 129), he instead refuses the romantic invocation of the creative power of nature and the role of the artist as a “co-producer” of nature (see Beiser 2003: 73-87). According to Bauer, there is no positivity in the natural order (see Bauer 1842c: 496; Cesa 1972: 311-5). From these premises one can also understand why Bauer (letter to Edgar Bauer, Bonn, April 7th, 1840, in Bauer 1844: 63), together with other Young Hegelians, such as A. Ruge or K. Fr. Köppen, criticizes Tieck, the co-author with Wackenroder of the *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*, in which art and nature are interpreted as forms of revelation. The *Herzensgießungen* were indeed one of the main points of reference of the Nazarene movement, an influential movement of painters that were crucial actors behind the cultural politics of Friedrich Wilhelm IV and, therefore, attacked by the Young Hegelians (see Rose 1984; Grewe 2015; Schimmenti 2019). Moreover, art is conceived by Bauer as an expression of the universal self-consciousness and, therefore, it has to take part in the struggles of the self-consciousness for its emancipation in history by negating any form of servitude. For this reason, Bauer recalls the idea of sublimity (*Erhabenheit*) of the self-consciousness in its ongoing historical struggles⁵, advancing, hence, a perfectionist aesthetics. In *The Trumpet of the Last Judgement against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist. An Ultimatum*, Bauer cites passages from Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, of which he was also the editor of the second edition (1840)⁶, to show Hegel's Jacobinism not only in the field of political philosophy but also in aesthetics and religion. Bauer rhetorically exalted Hegel as a friend of the religion of beauty (the Greek religion) and against any revealed religion⁷. The ancient Greeks

⁴ Rose 1984 has shown the relevance of the aesthetics of productivity for the Young Hegelians and Karl Marx.

⁵ The relevance of the concept of sublimity (*Erhabenheit*) in Bauer's own critical theory of art has been suggested by Moggach 2003: 33-6 and more recently in Moggach 2016: 320-3, in which the Author argues: “Sublimity appears in two dimensions [in Bauer's philosophy – G. S.]: subjectively, in quelling particular interests in the self [...]; and objectively, in contributing to the ongoing historical struggle to realize reason and freedom in social and political life” (Moggach 2003: 320).

⁶ For a philological discussion of Marheineke's first edition and Bauer's one, see Garaventa 2003: 22-3, in which is also taken into account Jaeschke 1986.

⁷ One can read the passages at the end of the chapter on *The Hatred of Judaism* (Bauer 1841b: 111-3) as a Bauer's reference both to Hegel's modification of his *Lectures on*

are seen as the historical moment in which freedom overcame the constraints of nature; therefore, aesthetic creation was conceived as a first transformation of the natural existing order (see Moggach 2003: 120-1), consistent with Hegel's conception, in which the Greek artists created the Gods for their community. In any case, Bauer does not want to give pre-eminence to the ancient substantiality in comparison to modern subjectivity, in which the individual Self demands autonomy in positing its own ends or in recognizing, rationally and autonomously, the external ones. In the chapter *Religion as the Product of Self-Consciousness*, Bauer discusses the interrelationship between art and religion, showing how the former implies the recognition between thought and being, unlike the latter, in which such recognition is not possible. Art, and not religion, is able to integrate the other of itself, as Bauer (1841b: 144) argues. At the same time, art does not represent a necessity imposed from an external force, as in religion, but instead the capacity of self-liberation of the individuals from external constraints. According to Bauer, individuals cannot be emancipated by an external power, but must emancipate themselves through their own struggles.

For Bauer, religion represents the quintessence of the principle of exclusion. According to Bauer, religion flattens the individual on its religious particularistic faith and, therefore, excludes for the individuals themselves the path to universality. The religious – i.e. the Christian – State is based on a theological-political “enframing” (*Gestell*)⁸, whose origin can be found in the concept of mercy (*Gnade*). The core of the enframing of the modern State is the sovereign decision to concede some rights to

Philosophy of Religion and as a self-reference to Bauer's own editorial work; in his lectures on philosophy of religion, held in 1827, Hegel had changed indeed the order of exposition between the religion of sublimity and that of beauty, giving preeminence to the first instead of the second. In the edition of the *Freunde des Verewigten*, edited by Bauer, the order is the opposite and it is maintained as it was in the previous lectures. Bauer is probably ironical with his own edition when he writes: “They [the Left-Hegelians – G. S.] immediately rushed to the public press to spread the story that the second edition of Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion* had been falsified in the interest of religion. No one stepped forth to show that it was in principle the same as the first edition, and but he differed through a sharper development of its atheism” (Bauer 1841b: 149). The previous citation modifies the English translation of Stepelevich 1989: 190, who wrote *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* instead of *Philosophy of Religion (Religionsphilosophie)*.

⁸ I use this Heidegger's term having Esposito 2013 in mind.

someone and, therefore, to exclude someone else from these rights⁹. If we think, for example, about certain rights attributed on the basis of national belonging, the contradiction with human rights is immediately evident for anyone, a problem whose virulence is tragically too real.

What does art have to say in regard to this problem according to Bauer? The relationship between art and politics in fact is symmetrical to that of the latter with philosophy. In the second case, as Tomba (2006: 108) correctly states, it is the *logos* that allows the excluded to claim equality with the excluders: "*Universalism is thus for Bauer a practice in which the excluded seek from the dominant forces the reasons for their exclusion, thereby positing a level of equality that prescind from previously existing relations*" (emphasis in the original). The level of equality is allowed by the use of thought in criticizing the excluders and, hence, the existing reality. When art frees itself, it rises to the level of philosophy. In the former, indeed, as soon as the narratives of the dominant forces are shown by and as an artistic artifice, also their rhetorical and concealing strategy, directed to the domination of the excluded, is shown, and the self-consciousness gains the critical and, hence, philosophical awareness of its own formative capacity. In this moment art is revealed as something twofold. On one hand, it temporarily shows its partiality and its degradation to a simple means. But, on the other, the universal power of human poetic capacities is shown.

3. *The birth of Bauer's aesthetic criticism*

The starting point of Bauer's aesthetic criticism can be found in his first writing, the Latin dissertation *Über die Prinzipien des Schönen (On the Principle of the Beautiful)* (1829)¹⁰, which Bauer composed on the occasion of the Royal Prize of the University of Berlin (now *Humboldt Universität*). Bauer had attended the same year Hegel's last lectures on the philosophy of art, and his writing was awarded by a committee, formed also by Hegel himself. The text is a confrontation with Kant's *Critique of Judgment* from a Hegelian perspective (on this topic see Moggach 1996; 2003).

⁹ For the reconstruction of Bauer's theological-political background, see Tomba 2002 and 2006.

¹⁰ I will cite from Moggach's and Foley's English translation, *On the Principles of the Beautiful*, in D. Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 183-212.

Before discussing Hegel's influence on this text, two elements are pivotal for the entire development of Bauer's philosophy, and need to be briefly discussed here.

First, in this writing an initial criticism of the universality of religion is found. Bauer criticizes religion because "faith excludes all doubt" (Bauer 1829, 68a). As Moggach (2003: 59) states, this issue "raises a doubt about the compatibility of religion and philosophy as moments of the absolute spirit". Even if this issue obviously poses the problem of a continuity or discontinuity in Bauer's thought during the '30s of the Nineteenth century, which cannot be discussed here¹¹, nevertheless, it shows how he was already trying to reformulate the Hegelian triad of the absolute Spirit, even assuming a critical viewpoint on religion (see Moggach 1996; 2003). When Bauer argues that art "is a kind of symbol of philosophy" (Bauer 1829, 110b), he is saying that art is the immediate side of philosophy. But the fact that he did not mention religion at all within this writing and that he only negatively mentions the concept of faith, shows how he was trying to put religion to the side, an attempt deeply different from Hegel's conception, even if indebted with the End of Art Thesis.

Secondly, by analyzing Bauer's dissertation terminology, it can be shown that he is advancing a practical conception of the Idea and of beauty. In a significant textual passage, he wrote that "Idea essentialiter actio est", "Idea is essentially action" (Bauer 1829: 94b). It is worth mentioning that – at least in his first writing – Bauer does not distinguish between the different concepts of action (*Handlung*) and activity (*Tätigkeit*) in Hegelian background. (Bauer uses the Latin term *actio* for both concepts). Following Menegoni (2018), *Handlung* refers, according to Hegel, to individuals in their particularity; whereas *Tätigkeiten* are spiritual since they avoid private and egoistic interests¹². In the dissertation, Bauer is letting the space of action and that of spiritual activity coincide, foresee-

¹¹ It seems to me that a series of recent Bauer's scholars argue that a rigid separation between an Old and a Young Hegelian Bauer misses the point of the continuity of Bauer's thought on religion (for instance Rosen 1977 or Moggach 2003). Even if one can discuss how Bauer attempts to conciliate faith and thought in the '30s, nevertheless Bauer's focus on the concept of *Kritik* in both periods is, in my opinion, difficult to avoid.

¹² Even though these terms refer to different spheres of Hegel's conception, nevertheless they have a theoretical contiguity in the "ethical action" (*sittliche Handlung*), when the individual action recognizes itself as a part of complex intersubjective and ethical relationships, avoiding, hence, private and egoistic interests (see again Menegoni 2018).

ing some themes of his own republicanism and perfectionism (see Moggach 2011; Moggach, Mooren and Quante 2020).

In the prize dissertation, this action is referred to the positing of the Idea out of itself and into its return to itself. From this speculative level, Bauer understands beauty. If, according to Bauer, Idea is truth and truth is life, the Idea in its doing is Beauty itself:

The idea as existent is life entirely, for the idea is truth, and truth inasmuch as it exists is life. Now the truth, inasmuch as it is life, is the beautiful, whence beauty and life are one. The beautiful is the concept which inheres in objectivity, just as objectivity appears only in the concept, and the entire concept is contained in objectivity. Thus the idea is, in itself, life; or life in its truth, in its substance, is precisely the beautiful. For that reason, the beautiful and life are identical to idea and truth. (Bauer 1829: 95a-95b)

As I shall demonstrate in the following section, Bauer is interrelating Idea, art, and life on the basis of the last Hegel's lectures on aesthetics¹³.

4. *The legacy of Hegel's 1828-29 lectures on aesthetics*

The indebtedness of Bauer's thesis of dissolution of religion in art finds its starting point in Bauer's prize dissertation. Bauer's later theory of the *Auflösung der Religion in der Kunst* is indeed foreseen by his writing of 1829 in which he conceives art as the "dissolution of the highest contradiction between freedom and necessity" (*dissolutio contradictionis summae libertatis et necessitatis*) (Bauer 1829: 79a). The concept of dissolution is, however, indebted to Hegel's last *Vorlesung über Ästhetik*. Even if Hegel adopts this term in almost all his lectures to indicate the End of Art thesis (see for instance Kehler 1826: 227), in the lectures of 1828-29, Hegel traces a significant difference between a "relative satisfaction" (*relative Befriedigung*) and a "true satisfaction" (*wahre Befriedigung*). If the former is based on a finite dissolution, which can take place at the level, for instance, of the *Realphilosophie*, the latter indicates the satisfaction that pertains to the spiritual spheres of art, religion, and philosophy. In this context Hegel speaks of the dissolution of freedom and necessity in the absolute truth: "The opposition of freedom and necessity is dissolved" (*der Gegensatz der Freiheit und Notwendigkeit ist aufgelöst*) (Hei-

¹³ For the following broad citations from Heimann 1828-9, I provide in footnotes a provisional English translations of the main sentences.

mann 1828-9: 21; *my transl.*). Nevertheless – and it testifies a substantial difference with Bauer's conception – Hegel adds in a dense passage:

Die Religion enthält die absolute Wahrheit und höchste Befriedigung, die Auflösung der Widersprüche. Jenseits der Region dieser Auflösung werden diese Freiheit und Notwendigkeit für absolut gehalten. [...] Wahrheit für Vorstellung und Gedanken, Seligkeit, was wir nennen, dieser Region gehört die Religion an. Sie ist die allgemeine Weise für Wahrheit im Geiste, wo allgemeine Ruhe sich findet. (Heimann 1828-9: 21; see also Libelt 1828-9a: 76)¹⁴

Even if Hegel also underpins the speculative side of art and recognizes philosophy as the “self-determining thought, the spirit in its freedom” (*das sich selbst bestimmende Denken, der Geist in seiner Freiheit*) (see Heimann 1828-9: 22-6; for the citation 22; *my transl.*) in these pages, Hegel, as opposed to Bauer, gives preeminence to religion in these passages instead of art, which results to be unavoidably bounded by outer sensibility.

The second point that is worth mentioning is that in the prize dissertation, Bauer embraces and radicalizes in critical terms Hegel's discussion of Kant in his last lectures. Hegel's discussion of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* in his last lectures is more developed in comparison to the previous Hegel's *Vorlesungen* (see Olivier and Gethmann-Siefert 2017: XXIV). In *On the Principle of the Beautiful* Bauer follows Hegel's discussion of the judgement of taste in the §§ 1-22 of the *Analytic of the Beautiful* of the *Critique of Judgement*. The main difference is that Hegel does not seem to develop a critique of Kant in these passages (Heimann 1828-9: 14-6). On the contrary, he is appreciating Kant's idea of purposiveness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) and speaking of an extension (*Erweiterung*) of the Kantian discourse:

Was allenthalben hier gesagt bei Kant ist, ist Ungetrenntheit dessen, was in unserem Bewußtsein als verschieden vorhanden ist. Im Schönen sind die Gegensätze aufgehoben. Das Schöne ist Allgemeines und Besonderes, Äußerliches und nicht getrennt, sondern auf eine Weise, wo beide Bestimmungen sich verbinden. Dieser Begriff des Schönen wird erweitert, wenn wir betrachten, daß diese Schöne

¹⁴ “Religion includes the absolute truth and the supreme satisfaction, the dissolution of the contradictions. Beyond the region of this contradiction, these freedom and necessity are absolutely maintained. [...] It [Religion – G.S.] is the universal manner for truth in spirit [...]”.

im Ganzen der geistigen Welt eine besondere Stellung hat und dadurch seine Notwendigkeit. (Heimann 1828-9: 16; see also Libelt 1828-9a: 66-8; 73-5)¹⁵

From this background, perhaps, it can be understood why Bauer does not situate Kant among the empiricist philosophers, as occurs in the *Encyclopaedia* of 1827, and considers Kant's philosophy closer to the *philosophia neo-terica*, i.e. Hegel's philosophy, as already noticed by Moggach (1996: 78).

Another crucial point that has to be stressed is that the prize dissertation follows the concept of Ideal (*Ideal*) as discussed by Hegel in his last lectures on philosophy of art. A. Gethmann-Siefert (2005: 89-94; in particular 91-2) has correctly shown that Hegel modified the concept of *Ideal* during his lectures. Hegel's famous concept of Ideal as the "sensuous appearance of the Idea" (*das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee*) is a peculiarity of Hotho's edition of the Lectures. Differently, Hegel during his lectures defined the concept of *Ideal* as existence (*Dasein* and *Existenz*), and – in his last lecture – life (*Leben*) or vitality (*Lebendigkeit*) of the Idea. If one compares the abovementioned Bauer's definition of beauty as "the life of the Idea" with Hegel's own conception of the Idea in his last lectures on aesthetics, the similarity appears to be evident:

Die Idee nun im Denken ist als existierend überhaupt das Leben, [das] Wahre. Gott ist [das] höchste Leben, das sich ewig realisiert und schafft sich selbst. [...] Leben ist also Idee überhaupt [...]. Das Leben ist schön als solches. Das Leben und Schön ist gleich, und das Lebendige ist schön. [...] So ist Leben als Idee in seiner Wahrheit das Schöne; das Wahre als solches ist Form des Schönen, beide haben denselben Inhalt, nur daß die Wahrheit den Inhalt für Gedanken, das Schöne den Inhalt für die Anschauung gibt. (Heimann 1828-9: 38; see also Libelt 1828-9b: 14)¹⁶

It is not a case that Bauer uses an interesting reformulation of Schiller's *Wallenstein* (1798) sentence as *symbolum* of his dissertation¹⁷: "Ernst ist

¹⁵ "What here is said everywhere by Kant is the non-separation of what is different in our consciousness. The oppositions are sublated in beauty. [...] This concept of beauty is extended if we consider that this beauty has a particular position in the entirety of the spiritual world and, thereby, its necessity".

¹⁶ Sentences such as: "The idea in thought is as existent generally life, [the] truth. God is [the] supreme life [...]. [...] Truth is therefore life generally [...]. The life is the beautiful as such. [...] The life and the beauty are the same and the living is beauty" can be found almost literally in Bauer's passage mentioned before, even if Bauer dismisses the reference to God.

¹⁷ Since the dissertations were anonymously submitted for the Royal prize, the candidates should indicate a *symbolum*, that is a motto, in order to allow the link between the author and the writing.

das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst", "life is serious, art is serene", a sentence that Hegel also cites when he discusses the concept of *Ideal* (see Heimann 1828-9: 42). Bauer writes, indeed, "der Ernst in der Kunst ist ihre Heiterkeit", "the seriousness in art is its serenity", paraphrasing another sentence of his teacher: "Die Kunst ist auch so ernst, und so war es auch Schiller, aber dieser Ernst ist heiter", "the art is also serious, and so was also Schiller, but this seriousness is serene" (Heimann 1828-9: 42; *my transl.*).

5. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, I have tried to show how Bauer's first writing was indebted in many significant aspects to Hegel's last lectures on aesthetics. Adopting the privileged vantage point provided by the publication of the new Hegelian sources on aesthetics, it seems to me that it is now comprehensible to what extent Bauer's 1829 writing was following Hegel's reflections.

As I sketched out, the prize dissertation follows 1) Hegel's conception of *Auflösung* of freedom and necessity; 2) Hegel's critique of Kant; and 3) the definition of beauty as "life" or "vitality" of the Idea. In regard to the first point, I showed that Bauer ascribes to art what Hegel ascribes to religion. Nevertheless, at least one question on this point remains open. How should Bauer's first account on art be integrated with his theological conceptions of the '30s?

In regard to the second point, as I suggested, Hegel's account seems to be more "neutral" than Bauer's. But we should remember that Bauer was also answering to the topic proposed for the prize, *id est* to discuss the theoretical problems of Kant's aesthetics.

I conclude with a brief consideration in regard to the third point. It seems to me that Bauer's *On the Principles of the Beautiful* sheds light on the complex history of Hegel's aesthetics, contributing in showing the serious difference that exists between Hotho's edition and the manuscripts of Hegel's students. Bauer's first writing shows indeed how significant and effective Hegel's last lectures on aesthetics were. This is probably one of the reasons whereby we can get closer to the myth of Hegel's deathbed prophecy¹⁸.

¹⁸ I wish to thank D. Moggach and the anonymous peer-reviewers for their valuable comments on this paper, which helped me to improve and to clarify my arguments.

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