

Lecture Series: Philosophy, art and science around 1800

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1. Philosophy, art and science around 1800

In this lecture, we'll discuss the various ways in which Kant's critical philosophy became extended in order to form a comprehensive system. Particular attention will be devoted to Kant's own remarks in his (little studied) section on "methodology" in the Critique of pure reason. It will be argued that we already find within Kant's own philosophy a number of important and historically highly influential suggestions for how we can go beyond the restrictions that Kant's critical approach seems to impose upon reason. Art and aesthetic experience can be shown to play an important role in this project from very early on.

- a. Kant, chapter "On having an opinion, knowing, and believing" from the *Critique of pure reason*
- b. Schelling, *System of transscendental idealism*, chapter 6

2. The organism as a model for understanding nature, art and science

Kant's "Third critique", the Critique of the power of judgement, links aesthetic experience to the way how we need to conceive of an organism, and both become in turn related to the creation of a comprehensive "system" of knowledge about the natural world. In this lecture, we shall explore the systematic link between aesthetics and teleology/philosophy of biology in Kant's Third Critique. As in the first lecture, Kant's methodological remarks will be particularly important; it is remarkable that apparently rather vague notions such as "hope" or the "hunch" towards a truth get important in this text. It will be shown how these notions are indeed considered very carefully by Kant, and how they in turn lead to new ideas concerning the methodology of scientific research. Background texts from the discussions in biology in this period will be used to situate the debate.

- a. Kant: Fragments from the *Critique of the power of judgement* (from the section on teleology and from the methodology-section)
- b. Background reading in the natural sciences: Goethe on the metamorphosis of plants and on the "experiment as mediator" (background literature: Tim Lenoir on Kant and Blumenbach)

3. "Nature" between philosophy and natural science

One of the most prominent and innovative developments in philosophy around 1800 has been the development of a "philosophy of nature" as a separate and crucially important sub-discipline of philosophy. Kant's Third Critique has been a key motivation for this novel philosophy of nature, as were Kant's Metaphysical foundations of natural science. We'll study how a philosophy of nature emerges from these Kantian backgrounds, and we'll pay special

attention to the interaction of this philosophy of nature with the natural sciences of this period, more specifically to the way how philosophy of nature contributed to shaping our notion of “natural science” in the first line.

- a. The programme of an idealist philosophy of nature: Schelling, *Ideas for a philosophy of nature*, Introduction
- b. Philosophical background: Kant, *Metaphysical foundations of natural science*, Introduction

4. “Romantic” art and “romantic” science

By now, it is clear that we have a closely woven network including the most fundamental forms of philosophizing, art and aesthetics, and natural science. We need to study these fields in their interaction, with a particular focus on the great “Romantic” scientist Johann Wilhelm Ritter and Philipp Otto Runge’s investigations into art, perception, and science. We’ll also look into the “dark” side of romanticism as it emerged soon enough from the highly optimistic early Romanticist writings.

- a. Johann Wilhelm Ritter: *Physics as Art*
- b. Background literature: Johann Wilhelm Ritter: Fragments from “Fragments from the estate of a young physicist”
- c. Nishida Kitaro: “Goethe’s metaphysical background”
- d. Background literature: Dark romanticism: E.T.A. Hoffmann (*Der Sandmann*) and Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*)

5. Case study: Landscape painting in theory and practice in the work of C.G. Carus

A particularly interesting figure in this context is Carl Gustav Carus: Medical doctor, natural philosopher, theorist of dream symbolism, and landscape painter. We’ll read some of his theoretical reflections on landscape painting and on philosophy, and relate it to his own practice as a painter. Attention will also be given to the (better known) Caspar David Friedrich, and to the seminal text by Kleist/Brentano on Friedrich’s painting.

- a. Schelling: Fragments from *Philosophy of Art*
- b. Carl Gustav Carus: Fragments from *Letters on landscape painting*
- c. Heinrich von Kleist and Clemens Brentano on Caspar David Friedrich
- d. Philipp Otto Runge’s paintings and prints (e.g. his series “Times of the day”, online available for instance via http://www.getty.edu/research/special_collections/notable/runge.html)

6. May 28th: Husserl lecture: Towards general science - New scientific concepts around 1900

The period around 1900 is fascinating in its being a period that is both a time for large-scale synthetic endeavours, and for increasing specialization, even

fragmentation of science and of everyday life. This means – linking this lecture up to the lectures on art, nature, and science in the romantic/idealist period, that we see a rather surprising resurrection of philosophy of nature at the end of the century. When a radical naturalist such as Ernst Haeckel universalizes Darwinian theory of evolution into the explanation of all phenomena in nature (and society), arguments from aesthetics (in his Kunstformen der Natur) and from romantic philosophy of nature become crucial.

On a far more general and abstract level – and that is what this lecture will focus upon, always insisting on the fact that this abstract level needs to be experienced, and that thinkers around 1900 took great efforts to develop new notions of experience that are adequate highly general forms of content – this means that all over the philosophical, scientific, and aesthetic culture, one strove for concepts of the highest possible generality. Husserl's "phenomenology" as the most rigorous, fundamental, and at the same time also experience-related form of philosophy/science is an example, but there are many others. In this lectures, we'll explore this search for the most general concepts imaginable, and for the way how these concepts were still thought to be filled with (new types of) content. This will allow us to draw a panorama of closely interrelated activities in science-philosophy-art around 1900 that both emerges from earlier traditions, and opens up novel directions for science and philosophy.