Didier Maleuvre: *Museum Memories*
(Stanford University Press, 1999)
Chapter 1, (excerpts)

History Lab

One must look at museums historically not because method dictates it, but because they are *essentially* historical. By putting forward an image of the past and managing the handing on of tradition through artworks and artifacts, museums participate in a historical production of history. Historiographic through and through, museums thereby beg the question of their historical appearance, of the role they fulfill toward history, in history.

Broadly speaking, museums are institutions devoted to the protection, preservation, exhibition, and furtherance of what a community agrees to identify as works of artistic or historical value. In them, the artistic and the historical fuse into one seemingly immanent essence. To the museum, the beautiful is inherently historical: it emerges out of the past like a residue or a ruin. The work of art in the age of museums is thus a historical appearance, a principle to which we have grown so accustomed that it almost eludes attention. Hardly anything in the museum is not historical, that is, hallowed by official history and productive of a collective idea of what history is. Even the creation of museums is a historical coup staged on the idea of history itself. Museums in their present form came into being at the turn of the nineteenth century, during the cultural secularization of history. Art and historical artifacts were being deprivatized, removed from the princely houses in which they had hitherto tested. The nation became the legitimate vestal of memory and of the past's ruins. Art institutes began cropping up throughout Europe: in France, the Louvre opened in *1793;* Spain followed suit in *182,0,* with the Prado Museum; Britain produced the National Gallery in *1824* and the British Museum in *1852;* and in Berlin, the Altes Museum was founded *in r83o.* This bracketing of art into the autonomous sphere of museums complements the movement that hands art over to the expertise of historical science, to the investigations of historiographic study and the minutiae of scholarship. This process takes place concretely in the establishing of academies and institutes, in the museification of music via repertoires, in the annexation of literature by philological studies. Art in the nineteenth century becomes an object of historical expertise.

Curiously, whereas the museum in today's world is associated with cultural preservation, it first appeared as a means of social renewal: as a way of breaking, rather than bonding, with the ways of the past. The museum was meant to further the momentum of a historical putsch, in reaction against history conceived as the politics of the status quo. The Louvre Museum, founded in 1793, illustrates the revolutionary thrust of the museum as institution: its initial purpose was to exhibit the spoils wrested from the aristocracy by the Revolution. Art, heretofore the plaything of noblemen, high clerics, and princes, suddenly became the official property of the nation. The opening of the king's palace to a crowd of visitors on August 10, 1793—the anniversary of the fall of the monarchy—demonstrates the political symbolism of the museum. Conceived as a pedagogical tool for the people, the revolutionary museum was an instrument consolidating a newly revamped national character, promoting the myth of a nation's innate "genius" as well as the image of a grand historical destiny. In the museum, history assumes the paternalistic countenance of fate: it tells the awed visitor that all stages of the past belong to a necessary pattern of reason, triumph, and order; that all is as it should be on the stage of world history. It is all constructed as a pageant of high artistic and historical moments, and history is viewed as an uninterrupted series of climaxes. The museum makes history into its own reason and justification. Its ecumenical mission of encompassing history is political insofar as it fulfills the essence of politics, to wit, the fantasy projection of a reconciled polls (Baudelaire wryly said that 'a national museum is a communion whose gentle influence softens people's hearts') History becomes myth: that is, an image that gathers people and summons an identity.

Initiated under these political auspices, the museum immediately had the effect of politicizing the contents of artworks. The Revolutionary Louvre Museum selected artworks partly on the basis of their potential for providing political instruction to the public. Civic, republican values were never far from mind when the Louvre's first curators decided which pictures to hang. The museum is often regarded as a symptom of art's au-tonomization in modern times. Yet such autonomization ironically began when art was assigned a political mission. However neutral the museum esthetlcization of art appears to be, it is nonetheless fraught with political overtones. Art is not the only thing that the museum neutralizes: as a powerful propaganda instrument, it also reifies collective identity by confining it to a set of seemingly eternal traits, thus neutralizing conflicting or errant tendencies. It is little wonder the museum falls under the charge of complicity with bourgeois ideology: it enthrones the values of con-formism,

respectability, stability, rationalism, permanence, and therefore class resignation; it confers onto the bourgeois order the halo of fate. These values bolster the ideology that conceives identity as invariant. Bourgeois history awards itself the prize for having "done" history: that is, for having gone through all the stages of development toward the present and for making the present into the summation and final stage of history. The paradox of museums lies in their representing the progress of history through diversity, yet doing it from the standpoint of a supra-historical, transcendental notion of what this history is—from a principle of rigid identity above and beyond diversity.

Thus the museum takes part in the process of societal rationalization that controls beings by immobilizing their identity, or by simply postulating an identity—identity being already a precipitate of social immobility. Rightfully, it seems, the traditional museum has been compared with the disciplinary institutions of the bureaucratic nation state that enforce control over persons, spaces, and objects by pigeonholing them and curbing their nomadic tendency. Thus the museum is like the school in that it purports both to educate and to regiment; it is like the prison in that it isolates its inmates in categoric cells; and it is like the hospital insofar as artworks are sanitized and shielded from the nefarious influence of extra-esthetic abuses.4 Thus confined to a specific place and reduced to a set of taxonomic segments, art is immobilized, stamped as an essence of eternal history. The museum is the temple of culture conceived as a fetish of identity: there culture is supposed to manifest itself concretely, magically. This fact may explain why, in keeping with this quasi-religious symbolism, the Revolution specified requisitioned churches and monasteries as the natural places in which to establish museums. The ideological dimension of museum exhibition invalidates the idea that art can be neutrally exhibited. For all the museum's appearance or Olympian detachment, social forces actively shape the presentation of art. Indeed, the museum's primary function of preservation and exhibition involves a process of socialization that translates the primary language of art into the secondary language of culture. Art becomes a trophy of culture and, as such, an instrument of collective identification. The intensely private language of the work of art collaborates, in the museum context, with what such art may once have stood against: the forces of historical preservation, that is, tradition and the political status quo. Yet the reinscription of art into a socially meaningful language must be more than good politics; people must also believe such reinscription to be in the best interest of art. Otherwise the museum would lose the reputation of protector of the arts, which makes good advertising for its sponsors, national and corporate. Apart from its political function, which was rarely avowed, the nineteenth-century museum assumed a disinterested artistic task: that of preserving, protecting, and restoring works of art and generally rescuing them from the abusive treatment of historical events, mercantile interests, infelicitous conditions, haphazard relocation, and so forth. Salvaging artifacts from history, however, is itself a historical gesture, on three counts: it takes place in history; it passes a judgment on history; it grants artworks a historical character. To decree that the museum piece is an object henceforth removed from historical becoming turns that object into a sacrament of history, a history so absolute as to be above historical being itself. The museum artifact is crowned with a historical aura of such sacredness that history itself, in its becoming, cannot touch it: art stops living the bad history of historical becoming and attains the transcendental history of a historical invariant. This sublimation of history affects the artistic material. The museum absorbs all particularities—works at every stage of their production, pieces of sculpture severed from larger ensembles, works that may have been disowned, or left unfinished—and makes them into precipitates of artistic essence. The museum conveys upon artifacts the sanctity of an eternal judgment: how they look here is how they always have looked and how they always should look. Objecthood is invested with the aura of fate. Thus the museum is historical and ahistorical: the former because it actively shapes the historical becoming of its collections; the latter because it seeks to raise them into a realm above the vagaries of history, where history itself has come to a stop or has not yet begun.History, therefore, is not a stream in which museums are thrown, on a par with other cultural formations. Rather, museums manufacture history; they engage its image and concept. They claim as historical that which survives history. History is what perdures above and beyond historical becoming, the museum seems to say. History is what escapes the material forces at work in history; what challenges history by means of history.

Pointing Fingers

Museum preservation and exhibition invite us to reflect on the concept of history. History in the museum is no longer the space where one dwells, the objects we touch and live with; it is a spectacle objectively removed. Museums thus lead us to ask: Is history to be conceived as historical living, that is, as immanence within a tradition? Or is history an objectified spectacle, a way of holding tradition as a

thing? Does true historical being lie in embeddedness within the social, economic, and material forces of evolution? Or is historical being preservation against the tide of these very forces? In short, the debate boils down to whether history is concerned with life or the petrifaction of life. Here philosophy entered the debate concerning museums, identifying in the museum a new manner of dealing with history and, most of all, of being in history.

Contemporaries of the Louvre's creation were aware of this fact. Today their voices are heard most intelligibly through the writings of Quatremere de Quincy, a man who occupied for a few decades the center of official cultural discourse in France. Quatremere began his career as an artist, later became an art historian and reigned over the Academic des Beaux-Arts from 1816 until 1839, from whose pinnacle he exerted enormous influence over the current esthetic discourse. A man of the Revolution who in rime got in trouble with the Convention, Quatremere witnessed firsthand the cultural upheaval when the self-appointed French State requisitioned artistic and historical artifacts. To him, the foundation of the Louvre Museum did not look like a holy incarnation of manifest destiny, a canonical fixture. In the turbulent and precarious days of the Revolution, the museum seemed rather a cultural coup, a forceful instrument of social engineering. What the museum did to history by wresting artworks from the hands of the few was consonant with the Revolution's agenda of chopping off centuries of French history. It was a matter of liquidation as much as preservation. Understanding the museum begins with the realization that, at least in France, it began as a revolutionary device. It intended not so much to maintain the past but to assert the rights of the present over the past; it was not a way of paying respect to tradition, but a way of settling accounts with French history.

Thus Quatremere saw history reappropriated as a regular spoil of war. He witnessed history being rationally managed by public policies intent on asserting themselves over the claims of tradition. Democratization of the access to art and high historical culture meant that the private citizen could become a historic/graphic subject—the rational observer of history rather than its passive subject. In the revolutionary museum, one was no longer subjected to history, as a serf was subjugated to the ancestral rights of the feudal lord; rather, one is addressed^ history, as a citizen is invested with the responsibility of managing the past and the nation's destiny. The difference between subjugation to history and rational and esthetic contemplation of history lies in a degree of immanence. The serf had no choice but to bow to the authority of perennial modes of living; his very existence as serf was an admission of the power of tradition, that is, the replication of the status quo understood as a natural process. Insofar as the serf's life acted out history's self-replication, his existence was immanent to history. By contrast, the ideal citizen is theoretically defined by his potential for self-determination and invention. His rapport with history is no longer one of acceptance and inclusion, but rather of observation and criticism: it is a thoughtfully mediated rapport. History is no longer the ground, air, and substance of existence; it is an object of intellectual observation and social experiment. As an object, a piece of reifica-tion, it can be put away, stored, held in reserve, managed. In short, it can be placed in a museum.

The realization that history was being alienated first dawned on Quatremere as the revolutionary armies began raking up artworks and artifacts during victorious foreign campaigns. First came the Flemish pictures, requisitioned after the annexation of Belgium; then came the Italian art triumphantly sent home by Napoleon during the Italian campaign (1796), and finally the ancient art pillaged during the Egyptian wars (1798). Already in 1796, Quatremere published 'Letters to Miranda on the Displacement of Italian Artistic Monuments,' which drew alarmed attention to the cultural damage of dislocating and transplanting artworks from their places of origin. Having in his youth admired the works of antiquity in their native settings, he found the sight of the Laocoon or Belvedere Apollo standing in Les Invahdes, in Paris, an artistic impiety, a barbaric swindle that tainted the very meaning of culture. Quatremere did not see the. museum as preserving art or culture; rather, he saw it as bracketing culture from its true context, in living history. Quatremere collected his thoughts and read them publicly in 1806. With the Restoration of 1815, when it was safe to do so, he published them under the title Considerations morales sur la destination des ouvrages de I'art (Moral considerations on the destination of works of art).

This work constitutes social criticism's first full-fledged attempt to respond to the phenomenon of museums. It is a plea for a traditional culture which Quatremere saw badly compromised by the practice of plucking artifacts out of their settings. What underlies Quatremere's protest against museums is the principle of cultural authenticity:

One destroys the viral example of art by raking it out of the public sphere and disassembling the works as it has been done for the last twenty-five years, and then reconstituting the debris in those warehouses called Conservatories. ... To what wretched destiny do you condemn Art if its products are no longer tied to the immediate needs of society and if its religious and socializing uses are curtailed. . . . You must stop pretending that artworks are preserved in those depositories. You may have carried the material hull there; but it is doubtful you transferred the network of ideas and relations that made the works alive with interest. . . . Their essential merit depended on the beliefs that created them, on the ideas to which they were tied, to the circumstances that explained, to the community of thoughts which gave them their unity. But now who may tell us what those statues mean, purposeless in their attitudes, their expressions turning to caricatures, their circumstances turning into enigmas? What do those effigies, which are now mere matter, mean to me? What are those mausolea without a proper resting place, these cenotaphs twice empty, these graves which even death has deserted?

By wrenching artifacts out of their original contexts, the museum deprives them of their cultural lifeblood. Once removed from its environment in the church, the temple, or the agora, the statue is neutralized, washed of its cultural, political, religious, spiritual functions. Chateaubriand made the same point in *Le Genie du Christianisme*:

Each thing must be put in its proper place: this oft-repeated truth is almost trite yet no perfection may exist without it. The Greeks would not have liked an Egyptian temple in Athens, nor would the Egyptians have liked a Greek temple in Memphis. Once removed, these two monuments would have lost their essential beauty, viz., their connections to the institutions and habits of a people.

Beauty, the value of an artwork, is therefore contextual, dependent on affiliations with use and cultural provenance. This idea is by no means restricted to conservative cultural politics. Even a progressive thinker like Proudhon shares its basic assumption, namely, that culture is circumstantial: he argued that the Obelisk of Luxor lost its commemorative dimension by being transplanted to the Place de la Concorde, where it became just another blank-faced urban gimcrack.8 In a similar vein, Qua-tremere writes that, outside of their proper settings, artworks on museum display revert to "mere matter." Thus de spiritualized, the artifact hangs vacantly and meaninglessly ("turning into enigmas"). It is almost as though, in the museum piece, Quatremere feared the experience of the esthetic itself: form without a purposive content, a singular object and, as such, very much an enigma. The stone-faced objects reject all human resonance. Consequently, museified art invites a detached, passive attitude toward artworks. This contemplative attitude is responsible for the deadening reifrcation of artifacts, their becoming fetishes of alienated consciousness:

So many monuments are stripped of their worth just from being displaced! So many works have lost their real value in losing their usage!. , . They are currencies only exchanged among scholars. Thus, as one can see everyday, these scattered pieces are condemned to a sterile admiration, these mutilated remains of antiquity, . . . where the antiquary looks for scholarship but where vainly the soul would look for real emotions. They are too far removed from the original destination. (Considerations morales 52-55)

Deprived of experiential content, the museum objects are mere vessels of dead knowledge, of alienated contemplation. The museum thereby testifies to modernity's failure to preserve the past unmaimed. Abstracted from any context, stripped of living history and shrouded with scholarly history, artifacts lie in the museum as corpses in an ossuary. Culture becomes synonymous with preservation, not production. It sides with the forces of death. Art, as the expression of vital culture, is only there to be contemplated as a hollow shell of its former life:

Displacing all these monuments, collecting their broken fragments, classifying t-pliciously their debris, and making this collection into a modern history course; all this is to constitute oneself into a dead nation; it is like attending one's burial; it is killing Art in the name of its historical investigation; it is not writing history, but an epitaph. (Considerations morales 48)

In sepulchral museum culture, history itself seems to bow to the verdict of its own obsolescence. It agrees with the touristic mindset which holds that culture does not really pertain to the present but to a glorious past— which is a feeble past because it cannot survive unaided in the present.

Authenticity

In Quatremere's critique, the museum is proof that the present has failed to devise an immanent rapport with the past. This alienation between a past embalmed as an image of itself and a present lost in contemplative ennui involves a problem of authenticity. Wrenching the past away from itself, dismembering and classifying it, the museum turns history into a fetish. Despite the respect and awe it commands in the art gallery, history is nevertheless emptied of experiential value. Thus the industrialist who declares all history to be "bunk" can, in the same breath, sign a fat check in support

of the local art institute without in the least contradicting himself. For history in the museum is precisely what is kept dead, relevant so long as it safely pertains to what is no more. History in the museum is inauthentic: it has been stripped of its driving power, it convalesces eternally and powerlessly. Thus the problem of authenticity comes to the fore at the moment it suffers a decisive blow. Modern thought invents the principle of cultural authenticity as, actually, nostalgia for authenticity. Modern consciousness, it seems, begins to worry about authenticity only when the social, economic, and political upheavals of revolution, war, and, later, industrialization started liquidating the genuine and the perennial. Authenticity is therefore an embattled concept: it owes its momentum to its negation in the empirical sphere.

Perhaps, then, authenticity in cultural representation is a mirage in the epigone's mind, a nostalgic illusion of modern consciousness dreaming of a past ideal integration of life and culture, of art and history. Certainly in Quatremere, authenticity becomes a concern because it is endangered: endangerment of authenticity, it seems, is inherent to the concept of authenticity itself.

This perhaps justifies the relevance of Quatremere today: it is not just that his emphatic critique was a watershed in identifying the very notion of culture as an autonomous concept itself worthy of cultural criticism;9 Quatremere is important because the demise of cultural authenticity he diagnosed became a leitmotiv of cultural criticism in the modern period. It is heard in the ever-repeated, ever-pressing realization that the modern era is ungrounded, cast adrift from the immanent life of tradition, that perennial ties have been broken. Indeed, reflection on the problem of inauthenticity is almost synonymous with modern philosophy of culture. The tenets of Quatremere s critique surface in Hegel (even if the latter nevertheless managed to turn the disenfranchisement of modern thought into its own panacea, the quantum leap of Spirit over the heads of all previous historical ages). Likewise Nietzsche is unknowingly Qua-tremerian when, in his Untimely Meditations, he warns that our hyper-trophied sense of historiography so impoverishes culture that it 'is not a real culture at all but only a kind of knowledge of culture. The legacy of Quatremere's critique is also discernible in Heidegger's call to rescue Being from inauthenticity by wresting the work of art from the metaphysical discourse of art history and from museums. Heidegger, however, is more of a pessimist than Nietzsche: he deems irreversible the damage done to culture and art by museification:

The Aegina sculptures in the Munich collection . . . are, as works, torn out of their native sphere. . . . Placing them in a collection has withdrawn them from their own world. . . . Their standing before us is still indeed a consequence of, but no longer the same as, their former self-subsistence. . . . This self-subsistence has fled from them. . . . The works themselves stand and hang in collections and exhibitions. But are they here in themselves as the works they themselves are, or are they not rather here as objects of the art industry?. . . Even when we make an effort to cancel or avoid such displacement of works—when, for instance, we visit the temple in Paestum at its own site or the Bamberg cathedral on its own square - the world of the work that stands there has perished. World-withdrawal and world-decay can never be undone.

The authentic experience of the Greek work of art as a reconciliation of 1'fe and art has given way to the irrevocable petrifaction of art and culture in modern times. This mood of ontological nostalgia is not restricted to that segment of philosophy concerned with overturning metaphysics. Even the Anglo-American pragmatism of John Dewey searches for a similar authentic experience of art:

When artistic objects are separated from both conditions of origin and operation in experience, a wall is built around them that renders almost opaque their general significance, with which aesthetic theory deals. Art is remitted to a separate realm, where it is cut off from that association with the materials and aims of every other form of human effect, undergoing and achievement. . . . Our present museums and galleries to which works of fine art are removed and stored illustrate some of the causes that have operated to segregate art instead of finding it an attendant of temple, forum, and other forms of associated life. . . . Their segregation from the common life reflects the fact that they are not a part of a native and spontaneous culture.

The museum embodies the doldrums of modern culture. Even in those philosophies that most accommodate themselves to the instrumentaliza-tion of mind, consciousness hankers for "a native and spontaneous culture." It is as though, for Dewey, art was the last repository of primal being, which instrumental reason had otherwise discarded from practical existence. More recently, Merleau-Ponty registered philosophy's complaint against the museum's dressing of living history into pompous history:

The museum adds a false prestige to the true value of the works by detaching them from the chance circumstances they arose from and making us believe that the artist's hand was guided from the start by fate. . . . The museum kills the

vehemence of painting as the library, Sartre said, changes writings which were originally a man's gestures inro 'messages.' It is the historicity of death. And there is a historicity of life of which the museum provides no more than a fallen image.
western culture sings the blues of its own fatigue, seeing that it has replaced artists and makers with curators, fatalists and observers. Enlisting materialist philosophy in this cborus of woe, Adorno too puts the museum in the dock, charged with the crime of stultifying culture in the name of culture, presenting objects 'to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are m the process of dying. . . . Museums . . . testify to the neutralization of culture.'
The idea that museums kill culture thus forms a universal doxa of modern philosophy. In truth, regretting authenticity seems almost synonymous with esthetic modernity. It is as though the embattled modern mind saw in art the last chance of authentic experience. Because the most important voices of modern philosophy have taken up the problem of extricating culture from the inauthenticity of museums, they are somehow indebted to Quatremere. His influence consists in marking an intellectual moment to which subsequent discourses on culture have returned consistently, hence perhaps a moment that modern philosophy has never fully lived down. Nor is it clear that our contemporary debates on culture have outgrown the complex of inauthenticity detected by Quatremere. On the contrary, the question concerning an authentic rapport to culture is raised every time the museum is the object of serious analysis. Recent scholarship attests to this fact. The issues of multiculturalism encountered by today's curators and museologists rehearse the Quatremerian issue of bridging the gap between the theoria of culture (historical preservation and exhibition) and the praxis of culture (the social, religious, and political life in which it flourishes). The modern museum is self-conscious about its deauthentifying and uprooting effects. Thus its profession of cultural inclusiveness and relativism bespeak a guilty conscience concerning the museum's tendency to level off and subsume all native particularities in the neutral sphere of historical culture. Curators have taken in stride Quatremere's idea that preserving culture is inherently fraught with objectification, mistranslation, and conjectural admixtures;16 and that cultures are subjected to essential damage in being transplanted to foreign climes, even under the best of circumstances and intentions.
The notion that art segregated from its original milieu is as good as dead echoes in today's debate about the "postmodern museum." The art critic Douglas Crimp welcomes the postmodern sensibilities of those artists who create artworks reflective and critical of the museum institution.17 This strategy, Crimp argues, allows art to secure a critical hold over its institutional circumstances and, to some extent, reverse the process of cultural and historical neutralization. Yet Crimp's postmodernism proves Quatremerian, hence merely "modern," in his assertion that the task of cultural critique consists in returning art to its contextual life in history ("It is upon the wresting of art from its necessity in reality that idealist aesthetics and the [nineteenth-century] ideal museum are founded; and.it is against the power of their legacy that we must still struggle for a materialist aesthetics and a materialist art").ls The order of the day calls for recontextualization. In this, at least, the materialist criticism that demands the reinscription of culture in the praxis of society joins forces with the reactionary expostulations of Quatremere against the newfangledness of museums.
Thus the craving for cultural authenticity builds into a philosophic consensus about nostalgia and long-lost life. It is nostalgia for immediacy, truth, authenticity in an idea—culture—where perhaps, by definition, it is not to be found. The point is not to invalidate Quatremere's claims, nor to cure the West of its longing for immanent culture. However, so much talk about cultural authenticity (yearned for, defended, mourned, and sought anew) does require that the idea of culture be once again examined, if only to see how authenticity as a notion pertains to it. Indeed, the claim that museums wreck culture is only valid after it is proven that culture embodies in itself an immanence, that its much-touted connection to "life" is strong and actual. It is one thing for modern consciousness to yearn for a golden age of cultural immediacy, the happy union of art and history, of mind and context, that is, in the end, of subject and object; yet this yearning is only justified if the principle it seeks (contextual, live, rooted culture) is proven true. To investigate this question, we turn to Quatremere's contemporary, to Hegel's critique of culture.

Hegel's Guide to the Museum

Hegel is the museum.
M. Merleau-Ponty, 'Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence'
Culture is the child of each individual's self-knowledge and dissatisfaction with himself.

Nietzsche, 'Schopenhauer as Educator'
That museums elicited an immediate philosophical response shows that, from the start, philosophy recognized in them more than a phenomenon worthy of philosophical attention. They represented perhaps a full-fledged philosophical situation: that is, not a mere category of philosophical discourse but a mirror of philosophy. It is a fact that the uprootedness of culture in museums resembles philosophy's own feeling of having forsaken an immanent rapport with being. Loss of origin is an inherent motif of modern philosophy. Philosophy, as Novalis's influential definition goes, is essentially nostalgia, an aspiration to find a home. Philosophy is the discourse concerned with ontological homelessness, with the lack of home at the basis of human existence. It is the discourse in search of its own origin and consequently, long before Rousseau, the discourse on origins, on the place it can call home.20 Coincidentally, it is the problem of origins that we find also at the basis of philosophy's interest in the museum. Rushing to the site of the museum's beginning, philosophy was there to decry its perverted origin and denounce the injury committed on authenticity. No sooner had the museum settled in its new quarters and founded a new home for art than philosophy declared this home a terrible travesty of homeliness. It is as though, from the beginning, philosophy was saying to the museum: you too have no ground, you like me have forsaken your origin.
Museum culture is epigone culture—belatedness as Weltanschauung. This much is made clear by Quatremere, who equated the museum with an impoverishment of the creative drive of societies: 'Just as collections of masterpieces only begin in the wake of the centuries that produced these works, so the spirit of criticism develops only after masterpieces are created. The abuse of museums and the abuse of criticism therefore occur at the same time and stem from impotence'" (Considerations 42-43). From being an expression of praxis, of vita activa, art is demoted to the rank of embalmed life, of vita contemplativa. The museum embodies an age whose creative powers have atrophied and which invests instead in a critically detached and impervious stance toward art. The painter David made the same point in 1798 at the height of Napoleonic appropriation of foreign treasures: "Those pictures, in particular, will lose a great deal of their charm and their effect when they are no longer in the spot for which they were made. The study of these masterpieces (now in the Louvre) will perhaps help to form scholars—Winckelmanns—but artists, no!"21 The museum is the crepuscular time when the Owl of Minerva takes its flight: it is the time for the criticism of art—for a philosophy of esthetics; it is not, by contrast, a time for creating art, not the time of art.
Promoting contemplation over action, the museum exercises the very same debilitating influence of which philosophy has been accused since its earliest days: that of advocating criticism over action, judgment over participation, watching over doing. Through the denunciation of the museum, in the person of Quatremere, philosophy thus diagnoses its own illness. To cure it, a true synthesis of subject and object is necessary: a remedy that will reground the disembodied subject of philosophy into the material substratum of existence, a reconciliation of spirit with substance. This is how Hegel conceived the task of philosophy, a way of curing itself of his friend Novalis's nostalgia for an ontological home. The point is not to argue the development of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, whereby he reunites subject and object and declares, in the end, that Substance is Thought and that the Real is rational. Of interest, however, is the way in which the Phenomenology of Spirit takes up Quatremere's argument against museification at the precise moment when self-consciousness is about to pass over into absolute knowing, that is, at the moment when philosophy is about to fulfill the subject's dialectical incorporation of object and become the absolute Spirit. This is not to suggest that Quatremere in any way influenced Hegel, since the former made public his Considerations morales in 1806 and the latter published the Phenomenology in 1807. Yet the coincidence does emphasize the point that museums were very much at the forefront of philosophy's concern at the time. Paragraph 753 of the Phenomenology begins by scoring the soon-to-become familiar critique of museification: the museum artwork exists as a beautiful but petrified object emptied of the spirit of its age. A fossil fit only for historiographic scholarship, the artwork is an object from which life itself has flown: 'The statues are now only stones from which the living soul has flown, just as the hymns are words from which belief has gone. . . . The works of the Muse now lack the power of the Spirit, for the Spirit has gained its certainty of itself from the crushing of gods and men.' Consciousness is no longer content with representing itself in external objects, Hegel argues. Overcoming the need to project itself in concrete phenomena, consciousness swears off the medium of art. 1 he death of the spiritual work of art (what Quatremere calls the "undeified statue") has to do with the self-possession of consciousness. No longer in need of representing itself, self-consciousness ascends to the realm of pure spirit. Spirit

thereby deserts the work, and the gods no longer inhabit statues. The despiritualization of art in museums thus coincides with the age of philosophical maturity. What Quatremere bemoans as the despir-itualizing of the work of art, Hegel celebrates as the sign that consciousness has discarded archaic forms of totemistic projection and evolved into a self-possessed, self-ruling spirit. Quatremere says that art is dead in museums; Hegel adds that that is as it should be. If the statue of the god standing in the gallery is devoid of its spiritual, necromantic, or religious force, it is because Spirit has surpassed the type of concrete embodiment proper to the age of the spiritual work of art. The spirit of philosophy, a free-floating abstraction, has taken in stride its separation from material life. That museums began to appear at the time when Spirit reconciled with its own uprootedness is thus no coincidence at all. If art is no longer vital, and is consequently entrusted to the care of curators rather than priests, it is because the philosophical subject has moved well beyond the need for objective embodiments. Thus freed of the need for immanence, the perfected philosophical subject feels quite at home with its own abstraction and art, stowed away in museums, slowly dies.

Of course, all this is not initially explained in Hegel. Yet, to be sure, seen through the mirror of philosophy, the uprooting and dereliction of art no longer look as tragic and senseless as Quatremere depicts it. Philosophically, Hegel paves the way for the museum's triumphant entrance onto the scene of history, a history that, as Hegel's demonstration goes, has reached its final stage. Just as history is in possession of its complete story, so the museum is capable of arranging synchronically artifacts from all historical strata. The museum mirrors the idealist totalization of world history by Spirit. In fact, Hegel's lectures on fine arts directly influenced the architectural layout of the Altes Museum in Berlin during the 1820s. The accession of the World Spirit to its zenith meant that earlier incarnations of mind had become mere curiosities and historical oddities fit for the detached gaze of esthetes.

Yet Hegel suddenly seems to come under the sway of cultural nostalgia: he too sees that museified art is but a pale image of real art, that is, the one living in its true historical setting:

They [the works of the Muse] now lack the power of the Spirit, for the Spirit has gained its certainty of itself. . . . They have become what they are for us now— beautiful fruit already picked from the tree, which a friendly Fate has offered us, as a giri might set the fruit before us. It cannot give us the actual life in which they existed, not the tree that bore them, not the earth and the elements which constituted their substance, not the climate which gave them their peculiar character, nor the cycle of the changing seasons that governed the process of their growth. So Fate does not restore their world to us along with the works of antique Art, it gives not the spring and the summer of the ethical life in which they blossomed and ripened, but only the veiled recollection of that actual world. Our active enjoyment of them is therefore not an act of divine worship through which our consciousness might come to its perfect truth and fulfillment; it is an external activity—the wiping-off of some drops of rain or specks of dust from these fruits, so to speak—one which erects an intricate scaffolding of the dead elements of their outward existence—the language, the historical circumstances, etc. in place of the inner elements of the ethical life which environed, created, and inspired them.

(*Phenomenology of Spirit*)

Like tropical fruits plucked from their trees and transported to temperate zones, artworks can still be enjoyed, but they have lost the savor and freshness they had in their original habitat. All that remains is the work's unconnected form and the archival knowledge that seeks to imagine its former circumstances. The world that has been left behind can no longer be apprehended firsthand. The despiritualization of art means also that art has become the alienated object of historical science. Being an object of study, art is objectified out of the theater of praxis. Indeed the very study of art implies that art shares only mediated and historiographic connections with life. Art history supplants religion in the caretaking of art and seals the despiritualized status of the artwork. The world in which the work of art blossomed, Hegel claims, can be laboriously reconstructed through recollection, historical data, and imagination; but this world as it was lived, and as it was brought to life inside the work of art, is forever lost to us. We may picture the world outside of the work of art—Greek social and cultural customs around the statues, for instance—but not that world as it was brought to fulfillment and breathed into those statues: this historical reconstruction will lead us not "into their very life" but merely to the imagining of their circumstances. This, Hegel explains, is the result of our objectifying mode of perceiving art. The statue in Ancient Greece was an epiphany: in it human consciousness encountered the object irnmanently. We, on the other hand, experience art from the outside, as an esthetic object. Hence, in looking at the ancient statue we try to perceive outwardly what took place inwardly — the commingling of subject and object in an esthetic object.

Thus far, Hegel mostly offers a sophisticated version of Quatre-mere's main idea: the opinion that the work of art seen in complete separation from its religious, social, and political background is as good as dead. Suddenly, however, Hegel reverses the course:

But, just as the girl who offers us the plucked fruits is more than the Nature which provides them — . . . the tree, air, light, and so on — because she sums all this up in a higher mode, in the gleam of her self-conscious eye and in the gesture with which she offers them, so, too, the Spirit of the Fate that presents us with those works of art is more than the ethical life and the actual world of that nation, for it is the inwardizing in us of the Spirit which in them was still [only] outwardly manifested; it is the Spirit of the tragic Fate which gathers all those individual gods and attributes of the [divine] substance into one pantheon, into the Spirit that is itself conscious of itself as Spirit.

(*Phenomenology of Spirit*)

In a bold about-face, Hegel reveals that what Quatremere holds to be the very heart of the artwork, its original context, is actually merely incidental. Where the artwork once belonged is a comparatively superficial mat-‘ ter, Hegel claims. Historical scholarship can bring us closer to the inner life of the artwork. The apparently alienating transmission of the artwork from past to present actually allows the work to be more true to itself. How does philosophy perform this reversal? For Hegel, the origin of the work of art in its cultural and historical context is a matter of happenstance. Thrown at birth in its cultural milieu, the work of art is no more fundamentally related to its context than a tree is genuinely — that is, consciously — connected with the landscape around it. Because it is bound to be, the contact between artwork and cultural milieu is as unre-flective and meaningless as an act of nature. Art does not will to be surrounded by its period: that is no more its own doing than the wind that has shaped the tree is the doing of that tree. An artwork may decide whether or not to exist, but cannot change the when and where of its existence once it comes to be. What Quatremere assumed to be an essential intimacy between artwork and history is thus perhaps a matter of bland, object-bound generality.

The merely outward rapport between the work and its cultural landscape can be turned inward when it is consciously recollected. In the same way that the maiden offering us the fruit gestures toward the fruit's connection to the tree on the one hand and to us on the other, the museum brings us the artworks from their natural surroundings and mediates the connection. By being taken up in consciousness, what was merely external—the contact between the statue and its surroundings—becomes a matter of conscious realization. What was outwardly manifested becomes inwardly comprehended. What was once a natural fact—the fruit hanging from the tree—is now enlightened by the gleam of recognition: fruit and tree are brought into a comprehended constellation. Thus, to Hegel, the mediation of historical consciousness has the opposite effect of the alienation commonly imputed to it: plucking the artwork out of its natural context does not sever it from its context but presents this context as what it in fact always is, a product of mind. At the extreme, there is no context outside of the subject who thinks it: hence there is no context outside of the reflective separation of subject from the immediacy of its surroundings. All this simply to say that object is a mediated category of mind, not an absolute. Hegel would say that the relation of the Elgin marbles to antiquity (whose transplantation Quatremere bemoaned)25 is more reflective once this connection is actually taken out of its immediate circumstance. The relation of the statue to its cultural otigin stands out more clearly as a reflective connection, rather than a natural one, when it is actually taken up in discourse (the only place where, in fact, relations exist). Insofar as their relation was always one of extreme self-conscious mediation, the statue stands truer to the culture of antiquity when it is not ensconced in it. Only in cultural separation does the true significance of culture emerge for Hegel. In that sense, our recollection of antiquity is truer to the spirit of antiquity than antiquity was in itself. Or again, antiquity is more genuinely itself in the British Museum than in the temple at Paestum.

How can this be? Is this not subjectivistic idealism, that is, Hege-lianism, at its worst? Yet Hegel is correct in the argument that culture is, after all, a product of subject. Culture is not the air we breathe; it is rather the atmosphere that we must produce in order to make the natural air breathable, that is, to dispel the terror of nature. Hegel is loath to give immediacy any lasting place in his system. Yet in resisting the allure of Immediacy, Hegel has at least reminded us that culture, as a product of subject, is anything but immanent or natural. This reflection is striking. It means that the historian who looks upon antiquity at a remove of two millennia has a better grasp of the real spirit of antiquity than the ancients themselves. Yet this suggestion merely stresses the fact that there is no antiquity, that is, no culture of antiquity, without the reflective distance mediating and removing antiquity from itself. Indeed, to Hegel, a historical period is more than the sum of events in a given temporal sequence.

Thus, for instance, the spirit of antiquity {what made antiquity a cultural entity) cannot be confined to the particular time of its occurrence. Time conceived as a mere temporal index, homogeneously identical throughout the whole of world history, is meaningless. A true historical period is more than a lapse of time. It is the self-consciousness of time: it is consciousness abstracting itself from mere immersion in time, and recollecting itself through the dialectic of presence and absence inherent to self-consciousness. In order to found a culture, a historical period must abstract itself from its immediate situation and consider itself for what it is not, what it is no longer, what differentiates it from other periods. In this manner, a historical period is a suspension of time, a way of resisting time. And this resistance is culture.

Ortega y Gasset gave vivid expression to this idea: 'Life is, in itself and forever, shipwreck. . . . The poor human being, feeling himself sinking into the abyss, moves his arms to keep afloat. This movement of the arms which is a reaction against his own destruction, is culture—a swimming stroke.'

Surely this comes from a cultural standpoint that has already made nature synonymous with primitive terror, dissolution, and tragic engulfment. Yet it also registers the basic realization that culture does not rest in the immediate. By its very existence, culture negates immediacy, the primal unity of subject and object, of mind and being. Even when it flirts with the reinstatement of this unity, philosophy does so from the standpoint of the philosophic subject. Culture is that by which consciousness hands itself over to itself: in doing so it steps out of mere embeddedness in being.

Hegel creates the philosophical language that allows us to understand culture as always already a theoria of culture. He thus dispenses with the Quatremerian dichotomy that, pitting theory against praxis, proves as deadly to culture as the museums against which it is supposed to protect culture. It is by wrenching theoria out of praxis, and knowing culture out of living culture, that one weakens culture in the first place. Quatremere's love of immanence is actually a complacency with the status quo, one that paves the way for blood-and-soil ideologies redolent of twentieth-century totalitarianism. Such ideologies too spoke for the reconciliation between art and existence, the sacred return of culture to the life of the people— all things which in the end proved repressive of culture. Although his argument is in good faith, Quatremere actually endangers culture by confusing it with identity, that is, the repressive drive to mete out identification at any cost. This drive for identity stands behind nationalism—to mention only the most rampant form of difference-denying formations. Culture as identification crushes otherness instead of submitting to the dialectical production of self-difference, as Hegel saw it. It is siding too much with reaction to assume that culture is self-preservation only, clinging to the rock of its foundation as though such basis were a natural substratum rather than a point of self-departure.

Even at the time of its occurrence, antiquity, as culture, was a self-conscious detachment from its own historical embeddedness. There is no culture conceivable outside of this dissension from the blind sway of time. Because it has to leave its native ground in order to become what it is, culture, according to Hegel, is essentially an uprooting, and philosophy—-so Novalis's motto implies—is its homeless conscience. In offering an image of uprooted culture, the museum preserves the self-estranging drive of culture. In this sense, the museum stands true to antiquity by doing to it what antiquity, as culture, did to itself.

Thus, to Hegel, culture is a culture of freedom insofar as it rejects immediacy. At the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the absolute spirit reviews the stages of its historical development and discovers that a dialectic of self-liberation from the immediacy of circumstances, physical laws, and fate has guided its steps. The history of spirit is a series of steps liberating spirit from necessity; the history of culture is correspondingly the progression of difference and not mere adaptation to the historical circumstances. To be sure, this history of difference is eventually subsumed by Spirit's triumphant mediation of all dialectical tensions at the end of the Phenomenology. In the same way, the museum neutralizes all works of art—which were, in their times, gestures of difference—and converts them into images of identity with Spirit. There is no denying that, in the end, Hegel's idealism corners culture into its pantheon. The ideally panoramic and synthesizing arrangement of the Altes Museum, inspired by Hegel's lectures, is an indication of the neutralizing effect of Spirit's victory over difference. Nevertheless Hegel offers us a lesson. No longer is it possible to hear Quatremerian objections to the museum without pointing out the essentialism of this critique. Dewey writes, for instance, that the artworks' 'segregation reflects the fact they are not part of a native and spontaneous culture.' The philosophy of culture emerging out of Hegel uncovers the idealist underpinnings of

historical pragmatism: what is a 'spontaneous' culture? Can culture simply be? Does that not naturalize culture, that is, idealize it or negate it? Is not culture rather a way of stepping out of the mere happening of history? Art will not let us settle these questions to the advantage of essentialism.
The comparison, historical and timely, between Quatremere and Hegel demonstrates that a philosophical debate about culture inhered in the museum from its beginnings. As a cultural object and an object in which the very idea of culture is at stake, the museum encapsulates modernity, that is, a certain distress concerning tradition and a worse sense of rootlessness concerning inauguration; an unsettled balance between preservation and estrangement.

Art of Misplacement

If the museum conserves the idea of freedom for culture (and such conservation of freedom is no doubt an oxymoron), it is because the work of art personifies freedom. As Hegel writes, art is ruled by "freedom-of production."29 Unlike science, which 'is occupied with what is inherently necessary' (Aesthetics I, 6), art does not create itself in conformity with physical laws and the dictates of nature; rather, it pries open the clamp of necessity over human existence. For one thing, art does not have to be. It creates forms that need not obey either the forms of nature or those of tradition. Art, like culture, 'fulfills itself independently and conformably with its own ends alone' (Aesthetics I, 7). Hegel assimilates Kant's lesson concerning the 'purposiveness without purpose' of art and sees in it the evidence of a human activity not simply ruled by self-rep reduction and survival, but also indulging in a free and apparently pointless production. To Hegel, this is almost enough to qualify art as the basic cultural gesture. That the work of art is not tied to the immediate—or to "desire," as Hegel says—confirms art's superiority. Desire, which enchains man to brutish physical existence, to survival, is overcome in art: 'this relation of desire is not the one in which man stands to the work of art. He leaves it free as an object to exist on its own account' (Aesthetics I, 36).
No doubt there lies in all this the seed of estheticism, the belief m art's empyrean detachment from existence. Yet the assumption that art is not necessary, and is therefore an act of freedom, cannot be wished away. The work of art is not simply a curious witness sitting by the race track of history. The artwork is the very model of a free activity that propels history forward. Art acts on the peculiarly human stance that what is (nature), is insufficient: "just being therein the unconscious sensuousness of nature is not a mode of appearance appropriate to" spirit, that is, to the principle of cultural production (Aesthetics I, 30). It is a telling fact that Hegel grounds his history of art in architecture. For Hegel, architecture is first and foremost the negation of the cave, of the natural shelter. It embodies the human drive to escape from the womb of nature and to renounce being as it is. By making architecture, human existence shows itself as that which does not merely inhabit naturally but which has to leave its place of birth. As Hegel's idea of the very model for all artistic production, architecture exemplifies the step of culture away from mere immanence.
Retracing culture's surge toward self-expulsion, the work of art embodies the essential drive of culture: that of breaking free of natural circumstances and representing nature as something left behind. Being a deliberate presentation of antiquity, the statue is the self-conscious separation of antiquity from itself: it is the self-consciousness and self-distance implicit in representation. The work of art is not merely the fruit on the tree of life but rather the fruit and the, maidens 'self-conscious gesture' that hands it over from the tree. The work of art carries within itself the awareness of its detachment from the cultural ground.
This all but reverses the ideology of art that underlies Quatremere's argument against museums. The cornerstone of that argument is that it is crucial for the artwork to rest in its context; it fits so snugly into its space and time that to remove it is to kill it. Quatremere's dramatic conclusion to his Considerations morales is instructive in this matter:
What emotions, what memories were attached to those very walls around this painting! Those walls have now all vanished and so did the enchanting spell of ideas and illusions that embellished the painted work. This discolored painting now exhibited in pompous galleries to the vain curiosity of cold criticism, seems but the shadow of itself. It is barely noticeable. . . . Nay ... I saw it, this image now unfaithful to the beliefs that watched over its making, I saw this image, a perjure against itself, decorating the gilded wails of that palace [Versailles], the one place in the world that should never have received it ... I saw it... and I averted my eyes." (Considerations 84-85)
An artwork without its original context vanishes; it is like a charm whose power vanishes at the magic kingdom's border. Hence art is contextual or it is not at all. Quatremere cannot bear to look at the

displaced painting ('I averted my eyes'); it is an unseeable painting and therefore a painting no more. Quatremere's remonstration against the transplantation of ancient art stands on the belief that artworks are necessarily bound to their surroundings, as though, Hegel would sneer, they simply grew like vegetables in the garden patch. In arguing that it cannot be severed from itself, Quatremere assimilates culture to nature, plowing it back into the realm of necessity. Because it has no choice but that of belonging to what surrounds it, the Quatremerian work of art likewise yields to the tyranny of social dictates. In the end, the work of art becomes a mere instrument in cultural reproduction. Thus Quatremere writes that the value of artworks "stems less from their formal perfection than from their ancientness, from the authenticity of their use, from their public life" (Considerations47) "I need to find them useful," he says about artworks, "in order to find them altogether beautiful" (Considerations 45). The belief that art essentially belongs to its "publicite," its historical situation, leads to the repression of art, its submission to the status of mere mouthpiece. The argument against museums, when it is done in the name of art's "authenticity" to the established culture, leads to political authoritarianism.30 Art is consensual: this stands out clearly in Quatremere, for whom the work of art is essentially an aid in stabilizing and enforcing the social consensus. Insistence on art's entrenchment in immanence (to life, history, society) neutralizes it far more than any museum display. For when art stops being an objection to what is, but instead becomes society's self-congratulating vote of confidence, then presumably it ceases to be art (this is not mili-tantism, but the Kantian distinction between craft and art).

Hegel's notion that the work of art is the determinate negation of the established historical synthesis at least dispels the threat of social as-similationism hanging over art. As a genuine cultural gesture, the Hegelian work of art pulls away from all sources, from all immediacy and determination imposed by necessity. Whereas the Quatremerian work of art bows to culture conceived as an overarching authority, the Hegelian work of art interrupts culture and thereby achieves inventive, emancipatory culture.

At the empirical level, however, Quatremere does seem to have a point: insofar as the work of art is made of matter it is bound to the material substratum of existence. Objectively the temple does cling to the mountain on which it is built; likewise the statue inhabits the agora or the Roman villa. In this respect, at least, art never occurs in an absolute contextual vacuum. But this argument is irrefutable only so long as the work of art is assumed to be primarily an object. It loses cogency if, as Hegel proposes, the essence of the work of art lies in its image-character, its appearance as semblance. Hegel develops his argument about the non-empirical nature of the art in the chapter entitled "Painting" in the Aesthetics: A work of art is primarily always an image; it makes something appear, it puts forward a fiction. As illusion, it maintains a reflective, and therefore mediated, rapport to empirical existence. Even as a concrete object, Hegel argues, a painting is foremost the presentation of an appearance as appearance: "Its [paintings] content is the spiritual inner life which can come into appearance in the external only as retiring into itself out of it ... the object which it presents does not remain an actual total spatial natural existent but becomes a reflection of the spirit in which the spirit only reveals its spiritual quality" (Aesthetics II, 805). In other words, however external and concrete the visual appearance may be in painting, the image itself remains spiritual, not actual: "It is the inner life of the spirit which undertakes to express itself as inner in the mirror of externality" (Aesthetics II, 801-2). The actual painted object is precisely, for Hegel, just a mirror, an image itself of something inner that presents itself as inner, that is, as subjective, non-empirical, illusory. The nonactu-ality of the work of art eventually brings Hegel to question the place of art. Painting, for Hegel, is the consummately modern work of art: it is more illusory, more spiritual, than sculpture or architecture. Hence painting somehow comes to encapsulate the problematic place of art in the age of museums. In Hegel's scenario, image-making first appeared as mosaic, an ornament to architecture. As such its place was definite and contextu-alized from the start. But the subsequent history of art made for an increased autonomization of the image:

Originally it [painting] has only the purpose of filling empty wall-surfaces. This function it fulfilled, especially in antiquity where the walls of the temples, and later of private houses, were decorated in this way. . . painting occurs only in earlier mosaics as a decoration of empty surfaces. The later architecture of the fourteenth century, on the contrary, fills its tremendous walls in a purely architectural way. . . . On the whole, Christian religious painting is separated from architecture, and its works become independent. . . , its function is not merely filling surfaces on a wall; on the contrary, it is there on its own account.

(Aesthetics II, 807)

To understand why the modern, Christian painting does not merely fit in its architectural setting, one must take into account the appearance-as-appearance status of the modern work of art. What justifies art's detached, autonomous status ("there on its own account") is the nonactual, nonconcrete appearance of the image as image in painting. The end of the decorative, that is, integrated, artwork is the advent of the artistic image as an "object which does not remain an actual total spatial natural existent but [which] becomes a reflection of the spirit in which the spirit only its spiritual quality by canceling the real existent and transforming it into a pure appearance in the domain of spirit for apprehension by spirit" (Aesthetics \\, 805). A painting, as image, is the negation of the materiality out of which it is made: for the image to appear as image, the mere concrete material of the image must recede and Set the illusion appear (otherwise we would only be staring at paint and stone). This is the work of art in the age of spirit: the appearance of something that does not appear (spirit) through something which recedes in this presentation (the concrete material of the painting). Thus the "Christian" or "romantic" work of art not only negates the external context given by its architectural and social surroundings; it also erases the context given by its own material support. In arguing that art, as image, is nonactual, Hegel derives the principle that art cannot inhabit empirical space in an immediate, natural fashion. Quatremere could not look at the painting because it had been removed from its primitive context. For Hegel, on the contrary, the work of art only appears once it abstracts itself from the framework of empirical immediacy. If the work of art ends up in a museum it is perhaps because museums provide the least amount of context, and this suits the noncontextual nature of the artistic image as image. In this respect, the museum is merely part of modernity, that is what unveils the spiritual, nonactual, illusory nature of art as image, that is, as semblance and not object.

What, however, of the antique mosaic? Does its original place in the temple justify Quatremere's judgment that it depends immediately on its architectural framing? Would a detached fragment of a fresco be necessarily misplaced in the museum? To investigate this question is once again to raise the problem of the ontological status of an artwork, Hegel's Aesthetics uncovers a categorical trembling about the image which does not just concern painting (a modern invention) but also the antique worlc °f art. A brief recapitulation of Hegel's historical position in the esthetic debate sheds light on his analysis. Quatremere's belief that art must remain embedded in life stems from a strong tradition of esthetic discourse set in the mid-eighteenth century by Baumgarten and later by Schiller. In tact, the idea that art is tooted in life stems from the concept of esthetics itself, Aisthesis designated the sensuous experience whereby the intellect fused with things perceptible, with matter. Art ought to reunite consciousness with being, with unrnediated existence, with the sensate. Indeed Quatremere's theory is rooted in the belief that art has a special, almost direct, connection with concrete, material existence, a connection that is generally described as "feeling." Feeling is what connects the subject with the artwork and its context in one effusive and symbiotic partnership. Quatremere argues that relegating artworks to the abstract space of the gallery snuffs out art's vital connection with life and "feeling." Because of museums, "the Arts have lost the ability to move; worse still, we have lost the ability to be moved. . . . We have taken from art its former ability to make its works eloquent, when a harmonious agreement of feelings prevailed between them, the moral sphere of their placing and the affection of those to whom they were addressed" (Considerations 61). Herein starts the rumor that museified art only addresses the intellect and no longer the senses. This assessment rests on the idea that art's native milieu is the sensate, that is, "feeling," or unreflective experience. In feeling, the subject believes he strikes an authentic, emphatic, and immediate rapport with the object. Because it rouses feeling, Quatremere thinks, the work of art reunites subject and object, consciousness with its surrounding, mind and matter. It offers a total experience, that is, a contextual experience.

Despite Kant's admonition that no work of art should be confused with the emotions it arouses, the "ideology of feeling" dominates romanticism until Hegel's Aesthetics. It is Hegel who philosophically raised art to the dignity of a form of reflection, calling it more than a plaything of the senses. By emphasizing the reflective, self-knowing character of the artwork, Hegel rescued it from the ideology that restricted it to a instinctive form of consciousness immanent with the object, a primitivism of the soul:

What [the work of art] wants is sensuous presence which indeed should remain sensuous, but liberated from the scaffolding of its purely material nature. Thereby the sensuous aspect of a work of art, in comparison with the immediate existence of things in nature, is elevated to a pure appearance, and the work of art stands in the middle between

immediate sensuousness and ideal thought. It is not yet pure thought, but, despite its sensuousness, it is no longer a purely material existent either, like stones, plants, and organic life. (Aesthetics, 38)

That the work of art is an expression of the intellect seeking to be one with the sensuous does not mean that it achieves such a fusion. The work of art does not merely dwell in being, in the sensate, but raises it to a reflective level. Tbe stone out of which the statue is made is no longer the stone in the quarry (for instance, Hugo's "let us just say it, once man has touched a piece of wood or stone, this wood and stone are no longer either wood or stone"). The statue is the self-consciousness of stone. Yet Hegel does not save art from the Scylla of materialism to throw it into the Charybdis of idealism. Leaving the material substratum of sensual existence behind, the work of art does not take refuge in the realm of transcendental thought. The work of art, Hegel argues, fills the fracture between a no longer and a not yet, where what has been extracted from a purely material basis does not yet participate in the pure abstraction. Stretching across the gap separating sensuous existence from abstract cognition, the work of art does not dwell in either side of the subject-object antinomy. The dialectical surpassing of sensuous nature does not mean that the just-negated nature settles into the pacified realm of pure culture. That would mean that art falls prey to a second-order immediacy. Art also turns down the synthesis offered by self-establishing spirit. Neither a repression of nature nor the latter's transposition into culture, art is non-identity itself. In this Hegel is not the idealist zealot he is often mistaken for. Art is a trembling expression that forgoes both the immediacy of life andt\\z immediacy of triumphant culture. The movement of difference between the sensuous and the conceptual, espousing neither life nor its cultural sublation by spirit: such is the restless experience sketched out in the work of art, one that does not rest in synthesis but shakes itself loose from synthesis and, in doing so, nudges culture into motion. For art's re-rusal of both immediacy andits sublimation by the subject rules out the principle of identity that Quatremere threatens to foist upon art and culture. Its unstable position between subject and object ensures that it avoids the pitfall of identification, that categorical compulsion by which culture petrifies itself and turns into second nature. In this respect, the "work of art constitutes what is best in culture: the restless movement away from the barbarism of essentialist thinking; as well as away from established culture which, passing itself off as a natural ground, is barbarism to the second degree.

There is, one could conclude, consistency in Hegel's endorsement of the museum. This consistency is not in the service of idealism, that is, it does not secure the hold of the Hegelian Spirit over art, culture, and history. To his credit, Hegel does not speak in the interest of Spirit alone. Nor is the museum justifiable for Hegel simply because it seems to replicate Spirit's triumphant summation of all preceding history. Hegel's defense of museum culture stems from the work of art itself, as it eludes the interests of both materialism and idealism, Quatremerian contextualism and Hegelianism. The artwork's restless movement between the sensate and the conceptual means that it belongs neither to the ground of nature nor to the home of culture. By putting art in museums, culture perhaps acknowledges the rebellious, uncategorical nature of art, its non-identity?4 Any protest against the museum's program of uprooting unknowingly amounts to an attack on art's non-identity. To complain, like Quatremere, that artworks lose all value upon being removed from their context is, in the end, to subordinate the restlessness of art to the identity principle (place, nation, people, and historical setting). One should not forget that the romantic museum once was deemed to stand against such subjugation. The real lesson of Quatremere is that he reminds us museums were once called anticultural for practicing a systematic uprooting of culture. This accusation underscores the revolutionary dimension of museums and their invitation to rethink culture apart from the pathos of roots, belonging, and identity.

In ungrounding art from the common run of existence, the museum officially makes room for the restless drive of culture. Museums are paradoxical: they shelter restlessness but, in doing so, they build a home around it. Curating the inventive drive of culture is a contradiction, for it destroys exactly what it means to preserve. In so doing, the museum embodies the antagonistic nature of culture, at once striving for self-invention and pulling backward to self-preservation and the status quo. The great paradox of museums is that they implement culture's program of self-preservation by preserving the very thing by which culture un-grounds itself, the artistic gesture. The museum thus manifests modern culture in the grip of a capitalist dynamic of historical production." Museums replicate the tensions of capital, with its fits of accumulation and expenditure, stockpiling and liquidation: museums preserve culture in permanent state of rootlessness, that is, they choose rootlessness as the principle by which to conserve culture. In capitalism as in the museum, rootlessness turns into a principle, into

permanent impermanence.36 It is a culture at once oblivious and remembering, one whose means of commemoration entail a forgetting, liquidation. As such, the museum shows chat there is no culture without uprooting, without forgetting, and that consequently culture is always, in a (Nietzschean) sense, artistic culture.

The Art Police

Enclosing art inside the museum walls no doubt removes it from the participative life of the polity. It brackets artworks off as qualitatively different from other objects: more precious, more fragile, more unusual, more ill-suited to survival, more alien, perhaps in a troubling way. The museum is not only the place where art is curated; it is also where art is imprisoned. Society locks away those elements deemed either too dangerous or too precious to move freely in the public domain. In the case of art, the distinction between the dangerous and the precious, or between the defensive and the protective, tends to blur. It does not seem farfetched, as one critic proposes, to liken the museum to its nineteenth-century cousin, the prison.37 This quarantining of art constitutes a political gesture because it defines social spaces, their mode of integration and their contents. In this respect, the argument regarding the socialization of art in the museum age is irrefutable: museums have contributed to the alienation of art. They remove artworks from involvement in the polis, neutralize their political thrust, freeze their contents as esthetically remote forms. By its very existence, the museum legislates against the direct participation of art in the polis.

Putting art behind bars, the museum protects us from art. A naked plump beauty in Rubens causes no stir among the museum visitors, whereas similar nudity on a billboard would call for an emergency session of the city council. This shows that the museum shields the visitor from the nudity in Rubens. It erects an esthetic barrier behind which the work of art is as surely neutralized as the sociopath is behind the prison bars. The museum secures the concrete foundation of esthetic detachment, with the warranty that one may feel safe around artworks (it is only when artworks directly challenge the convention of the esthetic neutral gaze that the citizenry calls for more energetic measures of confinement, The Mapplethorpe affair, a few years back, is a case in point: witness how the '. curators, caught in the crossfire, scrambled to convince everybody that the photographs showed undeniably esthetic features and that, as a result, they could be relished with detachment, thus bypassing their challenge to the neutrality of the esthetic gaze).

The exclusion of art from the participative life of the polis is therefore tantamount to its estheticization. As museum culture develops, so the political thrust of art is dulled and weakened. In screaming blue murder over an art he did not understand, the nineteenth-century bourgeois implicitly acknowledged the power of art to intervene forcefully in the community. Art was not so estheticized that it could not, on certain occasions, still poke through the exhibition walls and spark social controversy. Today, exhibitions of fierce political intent, artworks that strike out against the separation between art and the polis, artistic forms that rampage through self-congratulatory bourgeois culture—all this is taken in stride by the museum mind. Esthetic detachment guarantees that, however loud the work of art shouts, its protest will be met with deadeningly polite applause.

In fact, however, the estheticization of art—its bracketing-off and silencing—does not begin with the museum proper. Plato's animus toward artists already contains the seeds of the future preservation of art behind the gilded bars of museums. Plato banishes artists from the Republic for peddling a second-rate reality among the community. This tarting up of truth, for Plato, amounts to prevarication;

We should he justified in not admitting him [painter, mimetic poet] into a well-ordered state, because he ... sets up in each individual soul a vicious constitution by fashioning phantoms far removed from reality, and by currying favor with the senseless element that cannot distinguish the greater from the less, but call the same thing now one, now the other.'

Blurring the distinction between truth and its facsimile, the work of art tends to become indistinguishable from what it mimics. The political stakes implicit in this blurring of model and copy are what condemn art

and artists to isolation. Hence, we note, the Republic only seems to dismiss artworks for their illusory nature; in reality it banishes them because of their excessive reality, the fact they can take the place of the real thing. This is more explicit in the Laws. There, the truth-claim of art not only impinges on the truth-claim of politics, but also forces the legislator to recognize in politics a production of truth inherently akin to the one effected by artists. As a result, art is ostracized for being a competing form

of truth-production. Politics, as the officially sanctioned form of truth-production, does not tolerate competition. To the artists' query whether they may enter the city, the legislator responds thus:

Respected visitors, we are ourselves authors of a tragedy, and that the finest and best we know how to make. In fact, our whole polity has been constructed as a dramatization of a noble and perfect life; that is what we hold to be in truth the most real of tragedies. Thus you are poets, and we also arc poets in the same style, rival artists and rival actors, and that in the finest of all dramas, one which indeed can be produced only by a code of true Jaw—or at least that is our faith. So you must not expect that we shall lightheartedly permit you to pitch your booths in our market square with a troupe of actors whose melodious voices will drown our own.

In declaring that the tragedy of politics is the most real tragedy, the legislator recognizes that the difference between art's ability to create reality and that of politics is only a matter of degree. Politics, like art, produces truth through mimesis. Hence art is cast out of the polis because it resembles politics, and rivals politics in the production of truth. The make-believe dimension of art (whether mimetic or otherwise) is therefore tied to the place of its appearance: outside the polis—in the museum, for instance—the image-making aspect of artistic mimesis is benign because it is perceived as unambiguously illusory and apocryphal; in the forum, it is easily mistaken for politics, that is, for the "real" production of reality. Hence the creation of museums: they do not so much protect art from politics as politics from art.

Plato puts the work of art away so that its semblance may be recognized as just that. The work's mimetic character becomes politically weak m the museum, where mimesis loses its ability to produce truth; mimesis, formerly a species of truth, is reduced to mere representation, a copy. The museum perpetuates the make-believe status of art: whatever is circumscribed within a purely esthetic sphere is branded as illusory and representational—not the truth, but its image. This constitutes the imagistic dimension of museums, one which has been a bountiful source of inspiration for the avant-garde (for example, Duchamp's ready-mades). Sealing the make-believe status of art, the museum also cements the opinion that, on account of its illusory character, art need not be taken all that seriously. Or so the Platonic legislator hopes.

The assumption that art is placed in museums in order to be recognized as illusion implies that, outside of its esthetic confines, the work of art may exist in another form and might, as Plato feared, merge with life, with the production of social reality. In ostracizing art, Plato is perhaps responsible for the rupture between art and existence in Western metaphysics, the discordance before which Nietzsche stood in "holy dread,"40 the "distressing severance [penibie scission}" endured by Artaud.41 Plato stands at the juncture where Greek art gives way to the beginning of metaphysics. Heidegger writes:

Aesthetics begins with the Greeks at that moment when their great art and also the great philosophy chat flourished along with it conies to an end. At that time, during the age of Plato and Aristotle, in connection with the organization of philosophy as a whole, those basic concepts arc formed which mark off the boundaries for all future inquiry into art. (Nietzsche I, 80)

The ability to perceive art unesthetically ends with metaphysics, with Plato and Aristotle. It grants the philosopher-king a monopoly over truth while stripping art of its relevance to life: art is what is illusory, deceitful, and second-hand. Truth is a transcendence to which the work of art, bound as it is to empirical existence, can have no access. Politics alone has a legitimate claim to the production of truth. In the meantime, outside the city limits, the fete of the work of art as disenfranchised, apocryphal, and derivative is sealed.

This excursion into Plato's account of the polemical origin of the esthetic work of art shows that art's severance from life is a historical product. Museums were created because art is political (in the Gteek sense of the term), because it is so deeply political that it risks being confused with life (as in Plato's Laws'). The Platonic edict against art shows that the rnuseification of art started long before its full manifestation in the modern aee. Although the rationalization of art does act in accord with the one that reorganized the world of knowledge during the Enlightenment, it is not entirely reducible to it. Museificarion occurred with the advent of metaphysics, in the act of declaring art's mode of making truth improper. On the day art became a mere copy of truth, and no longer its effectuation, the first museum was founded.

Plato's banishment of art bespeaks the concrete political thrust of esthetics. It is no longer possible to answer the question "why do we put art in the museum?" with the type of curatorial good conscience that blocks out any reality outside the mission of safeguarding artistic objects. As is apparent in the Platonic edict, att is evicted from immanent life in order to protect the legislator's exclusive right to

the production of truth. The museum forces art to abnegate history, that is, to relinquish the power of truth-making. The latter becomes henceforth the privilege of politics and, later, of the scientist. The museum keeps art at a remove, not for the sake of enshrining its "eternal" essence, but for the sake of the practitioners of social conttol who, in creating an esthetic niche, secure the irrelevance of art in the face of dominant rationality.

The Origin of Museums

The Platonic legislator exemplifies the claim that museums coincide with the esthericization of artistic expetience and thus with art's neutralization. A problem arises at this point: if indeed Plato was among the first to banish art to a second-hand existence, it follows that museification originated simultaneously with the discourse on art in Western culture. The autonomization of art thus cortesponds historically with the appearance of art as art. While the Platonic legislator undoubtedly does art great injury, we owe to him the first formal reflection on art. That the political neutralization of art is entailed in art's emergence in discourse may serve as confirmation that any historical trace is the product of coercion: whatever leaves a mark rules out all other marks. Art's marked entrance into philosophy is such a forceful negation of art's claim to being. Without that negation, perhaps, art would still have to be known as art by us.[…]

The Avant-Garde Attacks

The esthetic exclusion of art from praxis became the object of a , fierce counterattack around the time of the first avant-garde. This is when estheticism's glorious separation of art comes under fire for inflicting a debilitating wound on the work of art. As Peter Burger argues, the first historical avant-garde gathered momentum by challenging the separation of art from the praxis of life. It denounced artistic autonomy as a sinister swindle: what enlightened rationality intended as art's freedom and self-determination increasingly looked like a prison. Artistic autonomy, it held, is in fact the result of an injurious trade-off. Art was given its autonomy only on the conditions that it relinquish its power over the polity. The museum may well be art's gift of exclusivity, but it is the clause of a settlement drafted by the enemy. The avant-garde thus appointed itself the bad conscience of the insritutionalization of art. The museum became the effigy of everything in esthetic autonomy that was injurious to the individual artwork. From the right-leaning Marinetti to the socialist Male-vich, no solution was found except to burn down the museum.

The avant-garde's originality consisted in assimilating its protest against the museum to art itself. The reconciliation between art and praxis was not attempted on the side of praxis (by militating politically against museums) but in the work of art proper. Art was entrusted with the means of breaking out of its own prison. From this derives the iconoclastic and confrontational aspect of the first avant-gardist works. The artwork itself cries against Art. This perhaps constitutes the greatest strength of the avant-garde but also its Achilles' heel. For in shaping Itself after its protest against esthetic institutionalization, the iconoclastic work of art unwittingly chains itself to the museum. No provocation is ever free from what it stands against. Like the unfortunate wanderer who sinks himself deeper into the quicksand pit with every effort to escape it, avant-garde art became an art of the museum precisely by struggling to wrencb itself free of it. The Futurist call to burn down the museums pushed Futurist works headlong into the hands of museum curators because the message only had significance inside the museum. For the avant-gardist cry that art is actually praxis, that the work of art is life, only makes sense if art is distinct from life in the first place, and furthermore within a context where the disrinctiveness of art is secured. One rarely sees a greengrocer insisting on the reality of his vegetables. To argue for the reality of art, as the avant-garde did, is to ask for the museum since only there will the message be understood. Duchamp's ready-mades set the example of this dialectic. On the one hand, the ready-made object underscores the principle that the institution of art is actively involved in determining esthetic value. It says that the object's esthetic apartness is created by the museum—that is, by the institutional context surrounding the artwork's appearance. Its underlying thesis is that the museum is responsible for arts apartness. In the gallery, Duchamp's urinal (Fountain by R. Mutt) is art and therefore a statement about art; outside the gallery, it is simply a urinal. Once taken out of the museum it is reintegrated into the praxis of life, but does so no longer as art. As such, it is hardly a critique of museums. Because Duchamp's ready-mades rely completely on the museum for their critique of the museum to make sense, they condemn themselves to a life sentence in the museum. They implicitly say that the critique against art's autonomy can be made only within the site where this autonomy is the rule. The urinal may clamor about art's yearning to get back

to praxis, to undo the imposed sanctity of the work of art; yet, if this wish were granted, it would fall strangely mute.

In the last analysis, the avant-garde's campaign against art's esthetic institutionalization amounts to a Pyrrhic victory: while it certainly brought attention to the numbing influence of museums over artworks, it thereby consolidated the museum, not only because avant-garde works relied on the museum context to sustain their message, but also because these works let this message absorb the whole of their artistic nature. Burger's study demonstrates how, in the end, the avant-garde only buttressed the estheticizing tendencies laid down by bourgeois art, or uncovered categories which esthetics used to uphold art's autonomous status.47 Anti-esthetic art concedes the fact that the anti-esthetic message can only be spoken intra muros, from within the museum. This co-optation by the museum supports the idea that the artwork's attachment to praxis is most powerful when it speaks, not from the fray of social forces with which the avant-garde work dreamt of merging (but in which it would end up drowning), but rather from the fracture of alienation. Only in alienation does art stand in its indictment against the state of social alienation that keeps art and politics separate.

Thus, in a sense, the museum preserves the memory of the memory of art's long-lost heteronomy (its immediate rapport with life) as an impossible realization. This is why any criticism of the museum runs the risk of losing touch with what the work of art seeks to achieve: the immanence of art to life. Such immanence cannot be simply posited by fiat. Art cannot wake up one day and decide it is one with life. What impels art to reach out of itself, and thus imbues form with its endless possibility for self-renewal, is the fact that art is not one with life in the first place. Art can only approximate the unmade, the immediacy of life, by making itself, by being made. Thus the task of reintegrating life is always undone. Similarly, it is only due to art's estheticization that the question of its immediacy to existence first occurred {just as, one may say, the image of nature arose, pressingly and vividly, after it had succumbed to its industrial looting). It is a good bet that in a world without museums, art would lose the drive to reach back into life. Indeed an art that is content with its own existence, an art that is totally reconciled with the polis, would run the risk of sinking into a sort of terminal form of classicism. This is why the reaction against autonomous art launched by the modernist avant-garde still sought refuge in the museum, rather than joining a world in which they would lose the will to outdo themselves.

The museum thus participates in the historical dynamic of modern art.48 It embodies a dynamic pole in the dialectic of the individual work of art. Art's "museal" moment is that by which the artwork itself recognizes its apartness from praxis (from life, being, nature, or immediacy) as constitutive of the work. Art perpetually moves beyond itself because it perpetually protests against what it does to nature in order to be. Indeed, if art did not see itself as autonomous (that is, as tragically cut off from life, or the "unmade") it could never have the will to recover the state of immediacy with life (to be one with the "unmade"), a will which fuels its historical progress as well as its artistic dynamic. In that sense, it is because art is museum-like that it strives toward life, and remains a living organism, a form-producing entity. Modern art derives its extraordinary vigor from such deep dissatisfaction with art. This discontent with its own museum nature, with its being a museum piece, accounts for art's raging progress toward the uumediated, toward the raw pure matter, which characterizes so much of modern art. Art's self-acknowledged severance from mere existence, and its desperate attempts at mending this separation, fuel in large part the impetus behind modernity's experiments. Rodin's work is an instance. The tension between the necessity of being made and the necessity of staying true to an immediate experience of being constitutes the burden of the work of art. This burden is the dynamic drive behind many of Rodin's most accomplished pieces. His Cariatide eternally shoulders, and buckles under, the burden of the stone out of which it sprang. The ontological ground of stone is clearly not only what the figure stands on, what it had to leave in order to be, it is also what the figure has to support, Atlas's ontological task. The ground of being becomes a burden of being: being is something toward which the work of art is responsible, something whose weight the work of art carries. The stone out of which the Cariatide is made is neither left behind nor completely subsumed by the figure; it is shouldered like a duty. Nature in the work of art is a pending debt, forever unsettled, not the fecund ground out of which the work grows. Had the avant-garde's claim that art can be at one with life been proven right, and had it succeeded as an artistic form, art would have died there and then. Similarly, if the Surrealists had made good their claim that the subject can be at one with language, and that language can therefore speak unmediatedly with existence, no literature could have gone beyond ecriture automatique. It is because artistic expression is autonomous, because no language can ever

escape its own museum, because no sculpture or painting will ever have the ontology of mere life, that art still exists.

Consequently, any temptation to demonize the estheticization of the work of art also goes against art itself (which, in its effort to break free of esthetics, ties itself to esthetics). This is most evident in modernist works of art, which, perpetually responding to esthetics and the museum, would become unrecognizable even to themselves if the museum were simply abolished. In rejoining the principles it sought to oppose, the avant-garde confirms the argument that the relation between the museum and the artwork cannot be thought to be merely external or contextual. The museum cannot be taken out of art, any more than a piece of music can be played without signifying its difference from the din of the city or the quiet of the countryside. The museum in the work of art is the realization that the work of art is distinct from life in the very moment it seeks to be like life.

Duchamp's ready-mades highlighted the fact that institutional placing is crucial in bestowing an artistic character to the object. This observation, however, only sheds light on half of the dialectic between the museum and the work of art. The work of art becomes art in the museum space; yet this raises the question as to what creates this space in the first place. For, surely, if objects become art only by being in the museum, the museum would not exist without its works of art either. The museum affords the theoretical space in which esthetic being is preserved, but only works of art make the museum's space artistic. Like Duchamp's urinal, Andy WarhoPs stacks of Brillo boxes would lose their esthetic character outside of the gallery. This, for Warhol, was perhaps the signal that the work of art must eternally annex the space of exhibition. The critic-philosopher Arthur Danto pointed out that "we cannot readily separate the Brillo cartons from the gallery they are in."49 The museum space around the Brillo boxes is not one into which the work of art merely fits as in an encasement. The Brillo boxes participate in the space of exhibition and in fact draw it in as a part of the exhibit proper. In the case of installation art, the space between the museum and the work of art is intensely interpenetrable (hence the absence of barriers: one can even walk through the Brillo carton pyramid).

To assume that the work of art is one with the museum just because the museum insures the esthetic ontology of the object is to overlook how the space of the museum is itself molded and sculptured by art. Just as the work of art structures the space around it, it structures its own relationships to the viewer. Hans-Georg Gadamer uses the theater as a case in point. In theater, the beholder is drawn into the rules of the artistic circle which, like a game, includes the participants. As Merleau-Ponty noted once, we do not see a work of art, we see according to it.51 To some degree, the space in which att is experienced belongs to the work of art. This principle is evident in performing arts, where the spectator has to inhabit the unfolding time of the performance; it is also evident in architecture, where the work models the space in which it is perceived; or again in a piece of sculpture which, as Warhol's Brillo boxes show, does not simply take place in space but molds the space around it, gives it texture and visibility, and "situates" us in that space. Warhol's Brillo boxes ask us to consider the esthetic space of art not as something extraneous to the work of art, but rather as an effect of the work, one of its creations. Thanks to the work's thrust into its surroundings, the museum is always de facto a place of praxis, not a neutralizing force field. It is an effect of the work of art, not a prior situation to art.

Perhaps then can we begin to reconcile art with its estheticization by seeing that the museum is part of the work's praxis, and therefore part of art's thrust into political existence, into "life." Art's reinclusion into life can occur, not by destroying the museum, but in making the museum the place where art takes part in praxis. If anything, the avant-garde should have taught us that the museum is not that autonomous to start with. It, too, is part of social life.53 The museum creates a public and publicness, it is itself the product of social forces and economic determination. Art in the museum is eminently socialized: after all, it publicizes art. Hence there is a way in which museums can be regarded not as a symbol of art's estrangement, but as the laboratory of art's abrogation of esthetic apartness. For museum art still models the ways in which we come to art and abide in art. As such it is heteronomous, a denial—quixotic as it may be—of the esthetic barrier.

Monumental Time

Halfway between the temple and the bank vault, museums aim at safeguarding the artworks undervalued physical and spiritual standing. No doubt, In purporting to offer a permanent safe haven to artworks, the museum also enthrones the surrounding social order—bourgeois democracy and

capitalism—as being itself cut from the same eternal cloth. The burgeoning of museums throughout Europe at the time of the industrial revolution reveals the new bourgeois order's need to anoint itself with the halo of the "eternal." Appointing itself the guardian of all past ages, bourgeois society hallows Itself: it becomes the reason of history, its telos and purpose. By objectifying the past, the modern mind devises an antidote to the secular view of history as progress and contingency. The foundation of the Louvre Museum in 1793 belongs to a revolutionary era which, in the midst of upheaval, needed to fashion a stable image of history. The museum lifts history itself out of temporal becoming. From this stems the messianic, eschatological character of museums.' The museum believes in history, yet behaves as though history were over. Perhaps it holds onto history as something that is also of the past, and secretly believes that time itself has come to an end. It builds a secret monument to the end of history.

In lifting art out of the hurly-burly of historical survival, the museum strips the artwork of its historical existence. It replaces historicity by historiography. Living historical existence turns into historiographic time-lessness. This contradiction explains the twofold character of museums. They have been accused of being both too heavy with historical dust and too historically spotless, excessively hlstoricizing artworks while cutting them off from the historical life in which artworks are born. Museums are historical insofar as they exhibit artworks according to historiographic principles (using such criteria as period style, chronological markers, and technique). On the other hand, they are ahistorical inasmuch as they raise artworks above the flow of historical becoming. The museum seems contradictory because it lectures about the historical nature of its objects while denying the very same objects the immanent historical connection about which it seeks to educate.

Yet the antinomy of the museum only depends on a particular concept of history. Museums are historically contradictory only if one holds that history exists in homogeneous time, that is, only if history is assumed to coincide with the scientific, chronological notion of continuous time. If anything, the apparently contradictory character of museums indicates a continuing need to reflect on history. We thus begin by asking what constitutes a historical object.

It is commonly said that the museum turns artworks into monuments. Monumentality surrounds the artwork with a ceremonial aura that keeps the spectator at bay. To a large extent, this aura derives from the design of space. As much as today's museums have taken to heart the avant-gardist desacralization of the subject-object dichotomy, a contemplative distance remains. A prohibition on immediate contact protects the work's presentation (that is, the use of staging techniques, dividers, glass shields, camera monitors, and electronic sensing devices that create a no-man's-land between the work and the beholder seem excessive even from the standpoint of security). Although it manifests itself spatially, the apartness of monuments stems in fact from a temporal disjunction. A historical monument appears remote because it makes room for an absence, something unaccounted for by its immediate presence.5" It is no longer simply in the present; it also gives body to a temporal distance, a rupture, the caesura of history. What is this caesura?

A monument is an object taken out of history, by history. Yet it stands for history, and is pervaded with historical spirit. The monument's historical character is our knowledge that the object no longer belongs immanently to history: being a monument is, paradoxically, being separated from history. Were the monument to be truly immanent in its historical background it would vanish back into it. On the contrary, in becoming a historical monument, the object is removed from its native ground in history. History in the monument remains present as what has been left behind, and appears to us through the veneer of loss. Only that which is threatened with oblivion is recognized as historical. The historical is thus what cannot abide in historical life, what is in danger of disappearing and never being known again. The monument stands equally distant from the past as from the present. The monument stands out of the past but equally claims an exceptional status in the present. For the monumentalized object stands out of the present as well: not everything about it can be assimilated into the present. The mountain outside my window is not a historical object: it has been assimilated fully into the flow of time. Ahistorical beings (such as natural landscapes) flow through a perpetual state of becoming. They are immanent in time. By contrast, the outstanding character of the monument lies in what cannot be completely remembered about the past: what, in the past, has not been indifferently incorporated into the present. To be historical, an object must have seceded from time: it cannot be one with its temporal becoming. The historical object is therefore one that belongs neither to its original setting—from which it has been singled out—nor to the present—in which it resists assimilation.

The historical is the stuff of the past which, by being remembered in the present, desists from being in the present: it is what cannot be reconstituted in the present. The real basis of historical remembrance is not what is remembered but what is left unremembered—the immemorial. Paradoxically, then, we call historical only those elements of the past that make their way into remembrance as the not-fully-remembered. Things that are remembered and commemorated de facto signify their problematic relation to memory. A monument is etched by oblivion, and only an oblivious culture can give rise to monuments. It takes a culture as oblivious as modernity to create such numbers of museums for everything, and monumentalize the past to the degree it did. As the historian Pierre Nora notes, we build "lieux de memoirs" (places of memory) because there are no more "milieux de me'moire" (real environments of memory).56 No doubt this remark evinces the nostalgic illusion that there once existed a form of remembering immanent in existence. Yet it does point to the alienated status of memory in modern times, an estrangement concretized in monuments, museums, and "lieux de rnemoires." Only by coming to terms with the obliviousness inherent in remembering did our culture become a historical culture. The monument tells us that we remember by losing touch with what is remembered; that we remember when memory no longer holds us. Monuments resist memory as much as they celebrate it. For the truly and fully remembered is in no need of being remembered: it abides in the smallest thing, as the substratum of reality.

That we create museums for every parcel of reality (so-called eco-museums, which collect and document local artifacts: agricultural tools, mining equipment, automobiles, domestic utensils)" shows that every thing in our self-liquidating culture is now threatened with oblivion. That every thing deserves monumentalizing means we view reality as something already forgotten. The real itself becomes a cultural heritage—the reminiscence of something which is no longer quite possible in reality. Industrialist culture has so little faith in its ability to remember that, like the neurotic scribbling his every move on a notepad, it commits every thing to the holding tank of commemoration, including itself. In the end culture becomes synonymous with the museum: culture views itself as one of those untouchable objects of the half-forgotten past, as the economic powerhouse is turning out planned obsolescence at an ever-increasing pace.

Monuments, then, celebrate the excess of irreducible, untranslated past which cannot be fully remembered. Monuments are historical objects because they cannot be integrated into the present, because they fail to participate in history as it unfolds. Anachronism is the essence of the historical object's historicity. In order to commemorate, the monument must first signify that it is synchronous neither with the past nor with the present in which it demonstrates. Initially the museum recognized the anachronistic nature of all remembering. The early museum was just such a series of abrupt historical juxtapositions. Soon, however, the museum compensated for the dislocation it inflicted by arranging the galleries in a clear-cut chronological order. It sought to mend the historical uprooting it caused by means of historiography and, out of guilty conscience, started ruling out any form of historical "inaccuracy." The historical miscellany, the cabinet of curiosities, the artistic jumble, all met with harsh sanctions. So did historical paintings that did not conform to a scientific notion of homogeneous chronological time. Already in 1820, the painter David, who made a career of painting authentic historical scenes, railed against those painters who "commit anachronisms they never should have allowed themselves, such as introducing modern popes into scenes depicting much earlier events."58 David disqualifies those paintings as historically inaccurate and anachronistic. Anachronism is anathema to the museum age. It is no coincidence that David also served as curator of the Louvre at a time when perceptions of history other than the chronological type had become undesirable, irresponsible, unscientific, even inartistic. What was it that the museum age found intolerable about these paintings if not a reflected image of the anachronism the museum itself inflicted on culture? The museum represses representations of the historical caesura which, in actuality, it introduced into culture as a whole.

Yet these "inaccurate" historical paintings of the premuseum age still tell us something about history. Let us take the example of Giovanni Pannini. Pannini's paintings are rather typical scenes of antiquity and elegiac ruins. Some of these paintings evidence the anachronism unacceptable co the museum. They set ancient events and characters among ruins, whereas, of course, these buildings were in mint condition at the time of the depicted events. Alexander the Great Before Achilles' Tomb (1740) depicts the ancient heroes living in settings not as they were at the time but as they would be many centuries later. By staging past events in the scenery as it would become in the retrospective glance of modern times—a ruin—the painter puts the

historical distance inside the very event. The historiographic distance provides the background of the historical appearance. Alexander the Great walks in a landscape shaped by our hlstoriographically alienated perspective. He lives in ruins, in the very image of time past. Pannini's painting seems to question whether Alexander the Great can exist outside our present outlook on his life; it asks whether the very ruination of our outlook does not enable the representation of the event as a historical event.

In presenting ancient figures amid ruins, the painting hints that the past exists only in the present's retrospective glance. Insofar as the past lies only in the act of remembering, it is indeed wholly contained in the present. The past, as a product of the present, is always a ruin because it always appears anachronistically, in the present. Alexander the Great exists only in the landscape of our memory. Thus, while Pannini's image may not be chronologically accurate, it is nonetheless historically correct. The painting seeks no immediate contact with the age as it was; the gesture of the historical event is framed by its irreducibility to the present. In other words, the painting knows that the experience of history is anachronistic.

By the same token, the present is denied entrance into the past. The past is extremely close to the present since it only exists through the present; yet it is also incredibly remote, since the very act of handing it over to the present means that the past cannot be grasped as what it authentically was. In that respect, the past is always a ruin, that is, an element that signifies its presence in the present as a damaged, inauthentic image of what it really was in the past. Indeed, the ruin is shaped just as much by what is still standing as by what has been worn away from it: its standing there is a staging of loss, unapproachability made into a monument. As Benjamin shows, the historical object's retrieval and exhibition is fundamentally determined by this unapproachability:

These data ... are lost to the memory that seeks to retain them. Thus they lend support to the concept of the aura that comprises the "unique manifestation of a distance." This designation has the advantage of clarifying the cetemonial character of the phenomenon [aura]. The essentially distant is the unapproachable: unapp reachability is in fact a primary quality of the ceremonial image.

Aura rests on the fact that only what was lost can be found again; it exists through its historical lostness. Through aura, historicity is preserved as the figure of a "no more" indefinitely suspended above the present: in that sense history is preserved with the urgency of its threatened, passing existence. History is the remembrance of the loss involved in remembering. It is the memory of forgetting.

Equally removed from context and unassimilated in the present, a monument is historical in the deepest sense possible: it preserves the un-approachability inherent in history and makes it an intrinsic patr of its appearance. The ceremonial character of the monument consists in keeping intact the historical caesura, the dis-remembering at the basis of historical commemoration.

We are now perhaps better suited to understand how the museum monumentalizes artifacts. Monumentalism stems from the artifacts historical displacement. The museified artwork is a monument because it relates to its historical period disjunctively, through the loss of historical connection with the period it is said to embody. All that the museum has to offer history is homelessness, homelessness as the basis of historical existence. Alexander the Great is homeless in the field of ruins, yet this homelessness is the very ground of his historical existence. Even if the museum discounts them as inauthentic, Pannini's paintings teach the museum a lesson: they remind museum culture that, in spite of its need for an authentic bond with the past, historical existence rests on a fundamental inauthenticity, that is, on a dialectical dislocation. Pannini proves himself more dialectically mature than Quatremere by pointing out that a monument does not inhabit its time. Its existence is not in the past, which does not exist, but rather in the dialectic caesura of remembering that which exists only in the backward glance of remembering. History is caesura, that is, the work of inauthenticity.